BBC Bridge

Bridge Builder

Handbook

For use with the BBC Bridge Companion

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BRIDGE BUILDER
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AN INTRODUCTION TO BRIDGE

A. Preliminaries

Bridge is a game for four players, divided into two partnerships. It is played with a pack (or deck) of 52 cards, and this is how you begin.

The whole pack is spread out face downwards on the table and each player picks a card at random with the object of settling the Partners. Assuming that the cards drawn are ACE, TEN, SIX and THREE, then ACE and TEN will become Partners against SIX and THREE.

You, Reader, have picked the ACE (the highest ranking card) so you choose a seat, and we will call you **South**. Your Partner sitting opposite is NORTH, and your Opponents are respectively, EAST on your right and WEST on your left. South, having drawn the highest card, becomes the first Dealer. West collect up the pack, shuffles (mixes) the cards and hands them to East, who cuts the pack into two sections, then places the lower section on top of the upper and passes the pack to you, South. Meanwhile, a second pack is being shuffled by North to be ready for the next round of play.

You deal the cards face down one card at a time starting with West and continuing in a clockwise direction until all the cards are dealt and each player has thirteen cards, collectively called his **Hand**, which he picks up and examines, eagerly, for the first time.

You are looking at a fine jumble of Red and Black, numbered higgledy piggledy, and the first thing to do is to arrange them into Suits. There are four suits, namely Spades, Hearts, Diamonds, Clubs. Spades and Hearts are known as **Major**, Diamonds and Clubs as **Minor**, for reasons to be explained a little later. However, in arranging your hand it is wise to order the suits in alternating colours – Black, Red, Black, Red. Or vice versa.

Next you arrange each suit according to the value of each card. Ace comes first, followed by King, Queen, Jack (or Knave). These are known as Court or **Honour** cards. In the method we use, each of these cards is given a separate value under the points system, as follows:—

Ace = 4 King = 3 Queen = 2 Jack = 1

As there are four of each kind of Honour card in the pack a simple calculation shows that the total number of points available in any one deal is **40**. This figure becomes so important to you in play that you should fix it immediately and permanently in your mind.

No other cards except these are awarded points. Now you arrange them, in their suits, according to their seniority – tens down to twos and your hand may look like this:

Spades A K 9 4 2
Hearts J 9 3
Clubs Q
Diamonds K Q 6 2

At this stage you can make an initial assessment of the value of your hand, two factors being relevant.

First, POINTS. You have 15, which, as you know, leaves only 25 divided between the other three hands. Your partner may have some of these or he may have none; time will tell, but it is clear that from the points aspect, you are much better than average, which would be 10.

Secondly, SHAPE. You have one long suit, the Spades, with five cards headed by two top honours. You have honours in all three of the other suits. Your Clubs suit is a **Singleton** which could be important. If it contained two cards it would be called a **Doubleton**, while a blank suit is known as a **Void**.

All the above seems to take a long time in the telling, but with very little practice the arranging stage will occupy less than a minute and the second not very much longer. Don't forget that the other three players are going through the same process.

So here you are, sitting South, your hand arranged and assessed within the limits of your present information. You were the Dealer so the other three players are waiting for you to open your mouth and start the bidding (or open the auction). So what do you say? Well, before coming to that let's go back to first principles.

B. Making Tricks

The object of the game, as in all games, is to defeat your opponents and in Bridge you do this by taking more tricks than they can.

A **Trick** consists of four cards. One player, let us say South, leads a card, face upwards. It could be a Spade. West now plays, and if he has one it must also be a Spade. This is known as **Following Suit** and is compulsory. Now North follows suit and East does likewise. The player who has put down the highest value card wins the trick.

EXAMPLE:— You lead from your hand (as shown above) the two of Spades. West plays the ten, beating your two. Your partner North, brave fellow, puts on the Jack, defeating West, but alas losing to East's Queen.

One trick to the opposition. Having won the trick, it is now East's privilege to lead, and so it goes on until thirteen tricks have been played and that deal is completed.

It was said that each player must follow suit, but if he has no card left in that suit, he may either discard from another suit any card he wishes, or he may **Ruff** by playing a **Trump** card, thus winning the trick. Because a Trump card will defeat any other except a higher card of the Trump suit.

EXAMPLE:– West leads Ace of Clubs. When it comes round to you, your poor Queen is swallowed up. West now leads the King. (He's an ass, but perhaps he thinks you have the Jack also.) North and East follow suit. But, having no more Clubs (and your partner will enquire whether you have, to avoid penalties) you RUFF with your two of Spades. By winning the **Auction** South and North have declared Spades to be Trumps so your little two beats the King. (Observe at this point the potential value of a Singleton.)

C. The Auction

When you, as the Dealer, open the auction you are beginning the first section of every hand of Bridge. (The second section is The Play.) What you are bidding for is the right to choose which suit shall be Trumps in that particular hand. (It should by now be clear that the partnership with the majority of the strength is most likely to win the auction.) By bidding a suit you are contracting to make more than half of the thirteen tricks. Thus, if you think you can make seven tricks with Spades as Trumps, because Spades is your best suit (see the hand above), you will bid "one Spade" not "seven Spades" because in all bids the first six tricks are not mentioned. "Four Hearts" for example is a contract to take ten tricks.

If you have a poor hand with very few points and no really long suit, you will call "No Bid", or "Pass". This does not debar you from entering the bidding later on.

The other bid you can make is "No Trumps", which means exactly what it says.

You have bid "one Spade" and now it is the turn of West, as the bidding, like dealing and the play, goes clockwise. All bids, as in all auctions, must be higher than the one before, so you must know their ranking. As follows, in order of seniority:–

NO TRUMPS
SPADES (a major suit)
HEARTS (a major suit)
DIAMONDS (a minor suit)
CLUBS (a minor suit)

It follows that a bid of "one Club" can be overbid by a call of "one" of any of the other suits or by "one no Trumps". A bid of "one Heart" is overbid by "one Spade" or "one No Trumps", but an overbid in either of the minor suits must be at the level of two.

Assuming that West bids "1NT", over your one Spade, North might bid two Spades in support of your suit, or two of any other suit. Now it is East's turn and so it goes on until the final bid is made; that is, the one followed by three "Passes". The final bid becomes the contract.

Note:
If the Dealer opens with "No Bid" or "Pass" and the other three players in turn call the same, all the hands are thrown on the table, that deal is abandoned. The deal passes to the player on the dealer's left who deals the cards again.

D. The Play

With your partner's support you have won the auction, the contract being 4♠. As you were the first to bid Spades you are now Declarer and will play the hand with Spades as Trumps, your objective being to make ten tricks (six plus four).

West leads the first card (the **opening lead**) and your partner spreads his hand face upwards on the table, arranged in suits with the Trumps on the right. He is now called **Dummy** and takes no part in the play except that he will draw your attention to any infringement of the rules. You, as Declarer, play the cards from both your hands until all thirteen tricks have been played. At which point, either you have made your contracted ten or you have not. If you succeeded you have made the first **Game**. If you fail, your opponents will claim a penalty score. In the first event, you thank your partner for his helpful bidding; in the second, you smile and cut the pack for West to deal the next hand.

Well, that is what we were taught nearly 60 years ago when Contract Bridge was invented!

Look at Hand 1 – How to win tricks

This will be found in Section A – Introduction. You are sitting South. The contract is 3NT .

West leads a Club and you win by playing the King from your hand.

Look at the Heart suit. You lose the the Ace, but make 4 tricks in Hearts because you have all the other Honours and a suit of five cards.

Now look at the Spade Suit. You have four to the A K Q 4. So beginning with the Ace, you play them in turn. Since there are no Trumps, your little 4 wins the fourth trick in the suit. Because the rest were equally divided, three in each hand, the other players all discard.

Now Diamonds. The vital card here is the King. If East has the King you can only make one trick because once the Ace is played he will take your Queen. But if West has the King you have another option. You cannot see Opponents' hands, but you can take the chance of West having the King. You play 4, and when West plays his 9, you play your Queen, which fortunately takes the trick, and your Ace gives you two tricks in the suit. This ploy is called **The Finesse** and is most satisfying when it succeeds. If it does not, you are no worse off. There are other ways of finessing which will emerge later on.

The play so far describes three of the four basic ways of making tricks. They are:

Brute Force
(The power of the Honour Cards.)

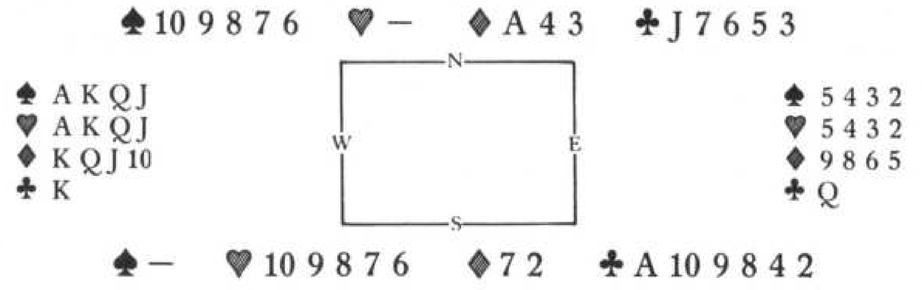
Length of Suit
(The fourth Spade and all the Hearts once you have lost the Ace.)

The Finesse
(Winning with a possible loser.)

The fourth way is by using Trump cards to ruff the opponents' winners and Hand No.2 demonstrates clearly how strong Trumps can be. Even though South and North have only two Aces between them and only one other Honour, the Jack of Clubs, you make all thirteen tricks if Clubs are Trumps.

Now try Hand 2 – Trump Play

Here is a picture of the deal, showing all four hands. You are the Declarer, sitting South, and Clubs are Trumps.



West leads the Ace of Spades and Partner lays down his hand as Dummy. You see at once that he has a void in Hearts, as you have in Spades.

The Ace comes round to you and, having no Spades, you ruff with the two of Clubs. First blood.

Next you assess the Trump position. You and Dummy hold eleven Clubs between you with only two against, but they are the King and Queen, so your immediate aim is to eliminate them. This is called **Drawing Trumps.** You lead the Ace of Clubs and, to your satisfaction, both the King and Queen fall.

Now you begin the process known as the **Cross-ruff** as follows:

You lead the six of Hearts from your own hand and ruff it in Dummy. Now lead the seven of Spades from Dummy and ruff it in your hand. Continue with this process and observe how all West's beautiful honours fall to your little Clubs. And after the ninth trick is taken you make the killer moves.

The lead is in Dummy and you play the ten of Spades. This is the thirteenth of the suit; Opponents have no more so you need not ruff. Instead you discard one of your Diamonds. From Dummy the Ace of Diamonds is led and away goes your last one of that suit in your hand, so that when the third Diamond is led from Dummy you can ruff it with your last Club. The final trick is taken by the ten of Hearts.

Hurray! you have made seven Clubs – a Grand Slam – with only 9 points out of 40 points.

Note, however, that only if you have CONTRACTED to make all 13 tricks can you claim the handsome bonus awarded for Slams.

In fact, you may play these hands again and again to the point where the principles they set down become forever fixed in your mind. They are, after all, the foundation stones of the game you want to play.

This is why Bridge Builder, we like to think, is unique. If you regard it as a teacher it differs from all other teachers that ever were. It doesn't go sick, or on leave, or on strike, being at all times immediately at your disposal. It doesn't abuse you or get angry because you don't understand something the first time round. Instead of TELLING you, it SHOWS you. It never gets tired. It is the only teacher in the world with absolute patience. Far from being your Master it is a willing and faithful friend. Somewhat like Aladdin's Genie of the Lamp. Rub (or press the right button) and up will come the profitable answers.

E. Game and Rubber

Your first objective is to make Game, and when that is achieved you try to win the **Rubber** by taking two games out of three. At the end of a Rubber the scores are added up, a conclusion reached, and you start all over again. It should be observed that the winners of a Rubber may not necessarily have scored the greatest number of points, though normally they do and this is a subtlety that affects the bidding process.

A Game is made by scoring 100 points. These points can only be earned by bidding and making one or more contracts. As we saw above, you and your partner made game by bidding and making 4♠ but if your contract had been 4♦ or 4♣ you would have scored only a part score towards the game. This is because a trick in each suit is valued as follows:

Clubs and Diamonds	20 points
Hearts and Spades	30 points
No Trumps	40 points for the first trick
	30 points for each subsequent trick.

It follows that to make game in the minor suits you must bid 5 of the minor and thus make 11 tricks. In majors you must bid 4 of the suit and make 10 tricks. In No Trumps you need only bid 3 and make 9 tricks:

In the Minors:	5 x 20	=	100
In the Majors:	4 x 30	=	120
In No Trumps:	40 + 30 + 30	=	100

But it is not necessary to score all the points in one deal; you can accumulate them. 2♥ bid and made counts 60. In a subsequent hand 2♦ brings you 40. Meanwhile, the opponents are also bidding and perhaps making, so the race is on to reach 100 first.

As soon as either side reaches game they are described as being **Vulnerable** and this status is reflected in the penalty points imposed if a contract fails thereafter.

F. Scoring

In Bridge, all four players keep the score, their own and their opponents'. Having a score card in front of you – and if you have not, please obtain one – you will see that it is divided vertically into columns headed **We** and **They**. Also, there is a line drawn horizontally across the card.

The points earned by bidding and making a contract – and only those points – are entered BELOW the line and count towards Games and Rubbers. All other points scored are entered ABOVE the line and are reckoned in the final tally at the end of each rubber. For example, were

you and your Partner to make a contract of 4♠, you enter 120 below the line in the WE column. The opponents will enter the same in the THEY column. You then draw a line below the score of 120 right across the WE and THEY columns, signifying the end of a Game. Part scores are recorded likewise until one side or the other have accumulated 100 points. Then the line is drawn.

Tricks made over and above those contracted for are known as **Over-tricks**. The points awarded for these are recorded above the line.

You cannot carry over surplus points below the line from one game to the next. For instance, your side bids and makes 3♥, which is 90. On the next deal you bid and make 3♦, which is 60. That is 150 altogether but the line is drawn and you cannot carry over 50 points to the next game. And if the opponents have made part-scores totalling less than 100, these are also lost in respect of counting towards game. The points will however, be added to the final scores at the end of the rubber.

Above the line points are earned by PENALTIES, HONOURS and OVER-TRICKS. Penalties are awarded to the opponents when the declarer fails to make his contract. Over-tricks are awarded when the declarer makes more tricks than he contracted for.

At any point in the bidding any player may bid **Double**. This means "I don't think you will make that contract. If you fail your penalties are doubled. If you succeed, so are the points you gain." When doubled, you or your Partner may **Redouble** and all scoring points are doubled again.

Details of all scoring including the points awarded for Honours are shown at Appendix "A".

If you win the rubber by two games to nil, you score a bonus of 700 points. If it is two to one you get only 500.

Now at rubber's end, both columns are added up and the winner is the team that has most points.

G. Bidding Systems

Since, as you now know, the only way to win Game, and then Rubber, is by bidding for a contract and making it, thus scoring points below the line, it follows that accurate bidding is the first requisite for success. This depends on two main factors:

[1] Good assessment of the value of your hand followed by reassessment as the bidding progresses.

[2] The passing of information between the partners so that each of them can assess the value of BOTH HANDS COMBINED. Naturally,

if you are dealt thirteen Spades, you simply ignore Partner and bid 7♠. But, since this will never happen in a long life-time, remember that just as it takes two to tango, so it does to bid a good contract. You could also say to Partner; "I've got a splendid hand with seven Hearts to the Ace, King, Queen, and two Singletons". But you are not allowed to say that sort of thing. All you may do is bid 1♥ for instance, or 3♦. By doing so you give Partner some knowledge of your hand, and when he responds, again for instance, 1♠ or 3NT, he is adding quite specific knowledge to the stock you have. And your next bid will add some more to his.

Quite Specific? How's that? you may well ask.

The answer lies in the "Bidding System" you have decided to use. Ever since Contract Bridge was invented, players have developed various methodical ways of bidding and these are called systems. Many were discarded long ago, others refined and altered as experience advised.

Our system, used by nearly all good players, is called **Acol**.

Don't be frightened by the word system; Acol is little more than a Bridge "Highway Code". The first step in bidding is valuing your hand. We do this by allocating points to the honour cards, as you have already observed and committed firmly to memory. But to remind you:

ACES = 4 KINGS = 3 QUEENS = 2 JACKS = 1

In the four hands of any one deal, therefore, there are just 40 points.

Again, by the kind of bid you make (especially the opening bid) you can tell Partner something about the shape and content of your hand, and subsequent bids tell him more.

With the hand: ♠ A K J 4 2 ♥ Q 9 3 ♦ 9 ♣ K Q 6 2
you open the auction by saying "One Spade". In those two words you tell Partner:

"My hand contains 12 to 19 points and a Spade suit good enough to be Trumps. With your help we can make seven tricks and perhaps more."

Now Partner reassesses his hand and bids 3♠.

The message he has sent you is this:

"I have 10 to 12 points in various suits and at least four Spades. If you have some extra values bid Game, if not pass." This jump raise is a "limit bid", an integral feature of the Acol system.

Note:
He will not support your suit if he has less than four of them because for all he knows you have only four yourself and eight Trump cards is the minimum desirable in playing the hand.

Now you do a simple sum. Add your 15 points to Partner's 10 to 12. 26 points is enough for Game. You have at least nine Spades between you, leaving only four for the opposition. You have a Singleton, so there will be opportunities for ruffs. Even if Partner has only 10 points you could make it. You bid 4♠ and you do make it.

The above is a very simple example of how Acol leads to accurate bidding. Bridge Builder shows you every possible combination of cards and the best possible bid in each circumstance. But don't consider any system infallible, because in Bridge, as in any other game, the inspired player can still make a fool of you. Which is part of its charm.

Now just a few more things about Acol before you go on to practise it. As in all human affairs players tend to differ on points of detail and you may find yourself attached to a partner with differing methods.

For example, many players today believe in what is called the **Weak No Trumps**. Far from being defensive, this is an attacking bid. It is used when a Player opens the bidding with a bid of 1NT: on a hand with a special kind of shape:

4 4 3 2
or 4 3 3 3
or 5 3 3 2

and a point count of precisely 12 to 14. Precisely is the word here, because if you have less than 12 with that sort of shape you say "No Bid" and if you have more than 14 you bid a suit. You are telling Partner that you have a balanced hand, with no useful Trump suit, and also indicating nearly the exact number of your points. This is your limit and he can take it from there. Moreover, in bidding as you do, your opponents are forced to overcall at the two level and this may be awkward for them.

It must be stressed that in bidding, when partners agree to use a particular conventional bid, such as the weak one No Trumps, they are stuck with it. That bid has its own special significance, and no other. Later, when we discuss the Blackwood and the Stayman conventions you will understand how binding these agreements must be.

As we have seen, the principle of so called **Limit Bids** is an essential ingredient of Acol. These are clearly set out in a later section, though we have already discussed the most obvious ones, namely the opening Weak 1NT and limit raises. When you use a limit bid you are telling Partner; "This is all I have. If you want to go on to higher things you must find the goodies yourself." Very useful.

Again, Acol as it has developed over the years is now positive on

the question concerning suits of equal length. Normally, if you have two five-card suits you should open with the higher-ranking suit – 1♠ for example, rather than 1♦. With two four card suits things are different. Here we propose that you open with the lower. Note first that you will have more than 14 points or you would have opened with 1NT (weak). Suppose then you have 15 points with four Spades and four Hearts. If Partner has four Spades (and at least six points) he will call 1♠. You can now support him in that suit. If he does not you abandon Spades as a possible Trump suit. If he bids 2♥ you are all set to go. If he bids 2♦ or 2♣ he will certainly have at least 9 points and you can confidently bid 2NT showing him the shape of your hand and leaving it to him to get the final contract or make some other move. But if you begin with 1♠ and then follow with 2♥ he can deduce that you have five Spades and maybe five Hearts. Again, and forever, we aim at accuracy and clarity. Accuracy in bidding can never reach one hundred per cent, but at least we can avoid confusing dear Partner.

Our object then, is to show you a complete system of bidding, one which does not allow for individual variations or charming whims. For if these do intrude you will find yourself sitting opposite a succession of frustrated and enraged Bridge players. Also you will lose money.

Note:

You will have noted that we use an abbreviated form of notation in showing the contents of hands and in the bidding process. As follows:

Honours cards: A K Q J
Lower cards: are shown as "x"
P for Pass
NT for No Trumps

In closing the preliminaries something should perhaps be said about the element of luck in this game of Bridge. It exists, of course. Everyone sometimes will have a run of poor hands in which nothing seems to go right, and there are Bridge-players who complain endlessly about the appalling luck they suffer from. Good players do not talk like this. They learn that over a period the luck is always balanced out and that the players who consistently win are those who have studied bidding and cardplay so thoroughly that they get the best out of poor hands while never failing to succeed when Fortune deals them a good one.

Finally, a short message to readers who have followed us so far.

To the Beginner. We know it does seem complicated; but once you have absorbed the terminology used in Bridge, one step does lead to

another. You deal, you assess, you bid and the hand is played, all according to certain rules and conventions which are logical enough. Bear with us, and enjoy yourself.

To the already initiated who is not yet an expert. Forgive us for stressing the simple preliminaries. We assure you that deeper waters lie ahead!

THE BRIDGE BUILDER
How to get the best out of it

This book is designed as a guide and accompaniment to the Bridge Builder Cartridge. In itself it does not purport to teach the game of Bridge, though the first section describes how the game is played; much as one might describe the various moves in Chess.

All the later sections are closely linked to the Exercises contained in the Cartridge for scrutiny on your own television screen. Their purpose is to clarify points of principle that arise in each exercise and to act as an appendix for continual reference.

We stress continual because no one can learn to play well without spending much time on both theory and practice. It is not like riding a bicycle, when, after two or three preliminary falls, you retain the ability for the rest of your life. There is always more to learn.

So the emphasis here is on the gradual development of skill by constant repetition; by returning again and again to the exercises, particularly when, during a rubber with friends, some refinement in bidding or play has escaped you, with a poor performance as the result.

Beginners should not worry about trying to master all the complexities at once. Study the basic elements and the rules, then start to play, because that is where the fun begins. You will make mistakes, of course, but so will your partners and opponents. Then consult the Bridge Builder which will demonstrate how errors arose and how they can be avoided next time.

You will be astonished to find how quickly you improve. It is certain that by the time you have absorbed all that there is in this cartridge you will truly have become an above average player – if not an expert.

A. Special button operations

A message like "You will make so many more tricks, do you wish to continue?" may appear towards the end of the hand. If you press 'Yes' to continue you may at any time press 'Pass' to skip to the end.

During card play the machine MAY allow you to see all four hands. It won't allow you to do this all the time and it won't tell you when you can. That would spoil all the fun! To see whether you are allowed, press 'Dbl' button. Press 'Play' button to revert to normal to continue playing.

You may wish to actually try bidding for all hands. In this case pressing the 'Play' buttons will automatically bypass your bid.

B. Messages on the screen

[1] Bidding the hand

During bidding exercises your television screen will resemble Fig. 1.

A The prompt:– you have bid correctly, press 'Play' to continue to the next example.

B Please bid.

C Exercise number.

D Question number.

E Score of correct answers at first attempt in this exercise.

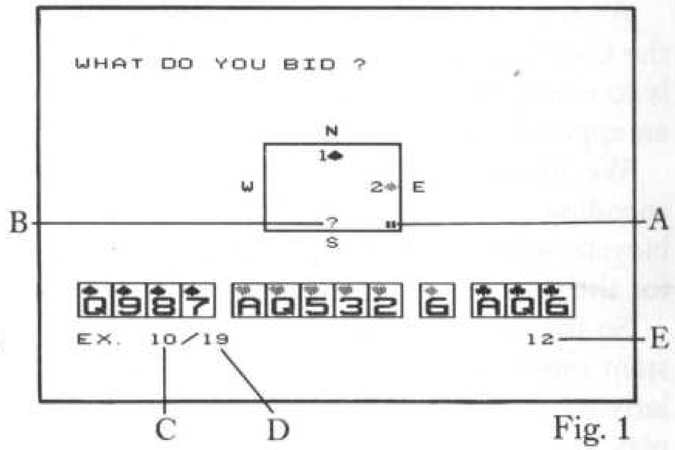


Fig. 1

Once you have made the correct bid the ? and ⁘ both flash on the screen together. You may either try alternative bids or press 'Play' to continue.

[2] Playing the hand

Your television screen will resemble Fig. 2 below during the card play examples.

A E/W trick count

B The prompt occurs at the end of each trick-press 'Play' to continue.

C Please select a card.

D The declarer is shown in black.

E The contract

F N/S trick count

G Hand number

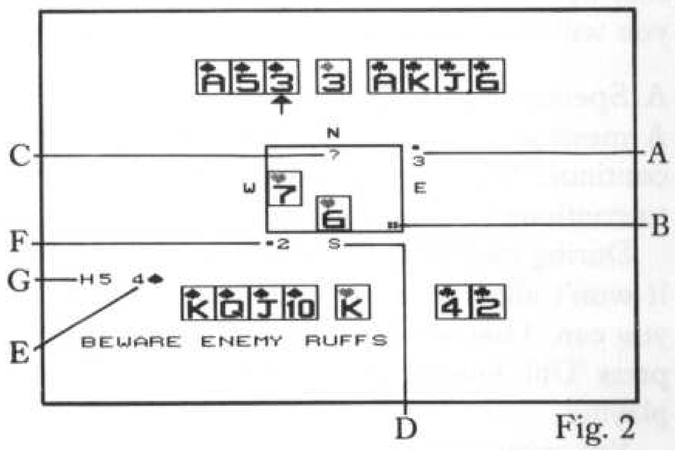


Fig. 2

EXERCISE 1

Opening the Bidding

This is all about opening bids. You are South and are asked to open the bidding on an number of hands each having different values both in point count and in shape. There is a danger that if the point system is new to you, you may neglect the importance of LENGTH in a suit.

For instance, a balanced hand (4 3 3 3) with 3 Aces and no other Honours is worth 12 points. A hand with ten Hearts headed by the Ace, King, Queen contains only nine. But on the former you may make exactly three tricks while on the latter, with Hearts as trumps, you make ten.

Very strong hands are rare. Mostly you are dealt BREAD AND BUTTER hands with around 12 to 19 points and not much shape advantage, so these are what you will be bidding on most of the time and this exercise concentrates on them.

A reminder

You need about 25-26 points between the partnership to make Game in either Spades, Hearts or No Trumps (that is, either ten or nine tricks). To make game in Clubs or Diamonds (11 tricks) you need rather more.

Admittedly 12-13 points in your hand may not look much. 12-13 points in Partner's hand will not look much either, but together they add up to enough to make a game. But do not forget the usefulness of PART SCORES.

Because it is easier to make nine or ten tricks than eleven, Partners will try to find a fit in a major suit (Spades and Hearts) or No Trumps.

What to Open

POINTS	SHAPE	BID
12-19	6 or more cards in suit	1 of that suit.
	Five-card suit	1 of that suit.
	Two five-card suits	1 of the HIGHER ranking.
	Unless Spades & Clubs	1♣.
12-14 (exactly)	Balanced 4 3 3 3, 4 4 3 2, or 5 3 3 2 where five-card suit is Clubs or Diamonds.	1NT .

POINTS	SHAPE	BID
15-19	One four-card suit and balanced shape	1 of that suit with one exception. See below.
	Two four-card suits	1 of the LOWER ranking.
	Three four-card suits (rare)	1 of the MIDDLE ranking if suits are touching. 1♣ if not touching.

Note 1

BIDDABLE SUITS:

When you bid a suit you are proposing it as trumps so it must contain at least reasonable cards. You usually do not bid a suit with four cards consisting of 9, 6, 4, 2. The minima, as Opener or Responder, are as follows:

3 Card Suits:–

Are NOT biddable as opening bids.

Very rarely you might get a strong hand like this where you would have to open a three-card suit and show your shape at a later stage.

♠ 5 4 3 2 ♥ K Q 8 ♦ Q J 5 ♣ A K Q

4 Card Suits biddable :–

A x x x
K x x x
Q J x x
J 10 x x

You may not bid a four–carder twice (i.e. rebid it) unless Partner has supported it.

5 Card Suits:–

Any five card suit is biddable and re-biddable.

Note 2

ASSESSMENT OF THE POINT-COUNT

If you hold a Singleton J or Q you should not count this as 1 point in valuing your hand to open. Likewise a Doubleton QJ counts only 2, and a Doubleton KQ counts only as 4 points.

EXERCISE 2

Responding to Partner's Bid

You are still South, but your Partner has made a bid and, as the RESPONDER, you have a choice of bids to help him if you can.

A. Partner has opened one of a suit

You have four options. You may pass (saying NO BID); or support Partner in his suit; or bid a suit of your own; or bid No Trumps. As follows:

[1] WITH LESS THAN 6 POINTS – You say No Bid. (In your early days as a Bridge player.)

[2] SUPPORTING PARTNER'S SUIT – To do this you should have at least four cards in the suit he has bid. Your point-count will tell you by how much you should raise his call.

POINTS	SHAPE	BID
6 to 9	four cards in	Two of suit.
10 to 12	partner's suit	Three of suit.
13 to 15	"	Four of suit.

All these bids of yours show that the strength of your hand is limited, to a certain point count range. This is why they are called **Limit Bids**. Partner will know that you have nothing further to offer and will make his own decision about going on to higher things. It is important to remember that PARTNER MAY PASS ANY OF THEM. He may have opened with a minimum count of 12. But if you have 13 to 15, and four of his suit, Game is possible, so you bid not 3 of his suit which he can pass, but 4. In short, if you are strong enough to bid Game yourself, don't leave it to Partner. As RESPONDER (Opener's Partner) you add 3 points for a void, 2 for a Singleton and 1 for a Doubleton but only when you intend to support your partner's SUIT call.

[3] BIDDING YOUR OWN SUIT

WITHOUT four of Partner's Suit, bid as follows:

POINTS	SHAPE	BID
6 – 8	without a suit	1NT .
6 – 8	with a suit	bid at ONE level. Eg. 1♦ – 1♥
9 – 15	with a biddable major or minor	Bid at ONE or TWO level as necessary. Eg. 1♠ – 2♣

If you have only 9 points it is usually necessary to have five cards in a minor suit. But to respond 2♥ to 1♠ you MUST have at least five Hearts.

[4] BID NO-TRUMPS

You cannot support Partner's suit and have no suit of your own.

POINTS	BID
6 to 9	1NT
11 to 12	2NT
13 to 15	3NT

B. Partner has opened 1NT:

He has 12 to 14 points. His bid describes his hand within narrow limits and your tactics change to match.

[1] With WEAKER HANDS – Bid as follows:–

POINTS	SHAPE	BID
0 – 10	Balanced	No Bid
0 – 10	A five-card suit or longer, in either Spades, Hearts or Diamonds.	Two of that suit. The WEAK TAKEOUT see Note 1.
0 – 10	Nine cards in the two majors combined. i.e. five Spades and four Hearts, or four Spades and five Hearts.	2♣. The STAYMAN convention. See Note 2.

[2] With STRONGER HANDS — bid as follows:–

POINTS	SHAPE	BID
11 – 12	Having one or two four-card majors.	2♣ (STAYMAN).

But, if your distribution is 4 3 3 3 with the four-card suit a major you bid 2NT .

The reason for this exception is that partner too has a balanced hand and with all those three-card suits the opportunity for ruffing is minimal.

POINTS	SHAPE	BID
11 – 12	All other balanced hands:	2NT .
11 – 12	With Five-Card Major	3 of Major.
11 – 12	With Six-Card Major	4 of Major.
11 – 12	With Six-Card Minor	3NT .
13 – 18	With no five or four card Major	3NT .
19 plus	See Slam Bidding.	

Note 1

THE WEAK TAKEOUT

You are telling Partner: "I have less then eleven points but one suit with five or more cards. No Trumps look pretty hopeless." You bid two of any suit EXCEPT CLUBS and partner MUST pass thereafter. Do not use it with a five card suit which lacks solidity. J 10 8 7 6 is more useful than K 7 6 3 2. With a few Honours scattered about the hand, despite a five-card suit, it is usually better to pass. Unless your hand contains a Singleton with a six-card suit and nothing anywhere else, your two-bid must be a better contract than trying to play No Trumps.

Note 2

STAYMAN CONVENTION

As with all conventional bids, partners must decide before play begins whether to use it. The principle of the bid is this:–

Partner has opened 1NT , but you think that the hand may play better in a major suit provided that both partners have four cards in it at least. So you offer him several options by bidding at the lowest possible level, namely 2♣.

Your hand may look like this:

♠ Q 10 4 3 ♥ 6 4 ♦ A K J 5 ♣ Q 9 2

12 points, four cards in two suits.

Partner will respond 2♥ or 2♠ if he holds four cards in either of them. If he does not he will tell you so by bidding a CONVENTIONAL 2♦ . You will then revert to 2NT which partner may either

pass with 12 points or raise to 3NT with 14.

If partner should have four cards in each major suit, he will bid Hearts first, and when you revert to No Trumps because Spades is your four-card major, he will then bid Spades. He now knows without question that you possess four Spades.

You will have noticed, not perhaps without some puzzlement, that you are invited to use STAYMAN when you possess no points at all (see table above), but you must have nine cards in the two majors combined.

Example:

♠97643 ♡8752 ♢65 ♣82

"What?", you may ask, "Bid 2♣ when Partner and I have only 12 – 14 points between us, with Opponents having 26 – 28? Why not simply pass or use the weak take-out? They'll Double us and score hundreds – nay thousands – in penalties."

What you are doing is deviously trying to persuade Opponents not to bid. You know you are in trouble but the opponents do not. If you bid Stayman 2♣ they have no idea of the strength of your hand and cannot assess the strength of each other's. Moreover to bid they have to start at the two level. Whereas, when you bid the WEAK TAKE-OUT they are much better informed. Either they will easily bid a contract of their own or double for penalties.

All this will rarely happen, but the strategy is in the best traditions of being as offensive as possible to the enemy.

STAYMAN therefore is an attacking bid to be used normally (a) only when Partner opens the bidding with 1NT , and (b) if you believe there might be Game or a part score in a major suit. Remember, Partner cannot have more than 14 points.

Summary

Either,

[1] You respond to Partner's opening bid in a suit by supporting that suit to the limit of your capacity.

[2] You have no support in Partner's suit and no biddable suit of your own. But you have biddable points so you bid No Trumps to the limit of your capacity.

These are the **Limit Bids**. You have no more to offer. Partner may pass or continue at his own risk.

Or,

[3] You have a biddable suit of your own and you bid it.

This is not a LIMIT BID. Partner has made a proposal. You have not rejected it. Instead, you have made a proposal of your own. He has said "Shall we live in Hampstead?" and you have replied "Possibly, but wouldn't Fulham be more congenial?"

In this event the dialogue must continue. Partner may not pass. He MUST bid again.

EXERCISE 3
Opener's Rebid

Sitting South you have opened the bidding. Partner has responded in one of several ways and now it is your turn again. You are starting the 'Second Round'. You can begin to make some deductions.

A. First, the occasions when you should pass

[1] You open in a suit call at the one level with the minimum number of points, 12 or 13, and Partner responds with a bid of two of your suit. The combined hands are not strong enough to continue.

[2] Again you have bid, say, 1♥ with MINIMUM points. Partner bids 3♥. You pass because he cannot have more than 10 to 12 points, so you have not enough between you for Game.

[3] You have bid 1NT (Weak). Partner bids either 2♠, 2♥, or 2♦. He is telling you: "I have a terrible hand, no use for No Trumps, but my suit has length. For Heaven's sake stop here!"

B. Second, the occasions when you might bid

As we have seen, when you have opened with a minimum hand and your partner makes a limited response such as 1NT, or a single raise, you pass. If you are better than minimum you can encourage Partner according to the following table.

POINTS	RESPONSE	BID
12 – 15	TO A 1NT RESPONSE	No bid or a minimum re-bid. This will depend on the shape of your hand and its contents apart from Honours. Tens and nines win tricks; Twos and threes do not.
16 – 18	"	Make an encouraging re-bid.
12 – 15	TO ALL SINGLE-RAISE LIMIT BIDS except 1NT	No Bid.
16 – 18	"	Make an encouraging re-bid.
19 – 20	"	Bid Game.
12 – 14	TO DOUBLE-RAISE LIMIT BIDS	No Bid.
15 plus:	"	Bid Game.

C. The occasion when you must NOT pass

This, as you are aware, occurs when you open with one of a suit and Partner responds by bidding a suit of his own.

[1] TO A RESPONSE AT THE ONE LEVEL

All you know is that Partner has at least four of his suit and anything from 6 to 16 points. You must bid again, telling him the limits of your hand. Did you open with the minimum? If not how much stronger are you? First we look at hands where you have no support for Partner's suit.

[a] YOUR HAND	POINTS	RE-BID
One five-card major suit. No Four-card suit.	12 – 14	2 of your suit.
	15 – 16	1NT
	17 – 18	2NT
	18 – 19	3NT

Note:

The overlapping indicates that hands with an equal number of points may have different values in cards other than honours.

[b] YOUR HAND	POINTS	RE-BID
One five-card suit plus a four-card suit	12 – 14	Bid four-card suit if lower ranking. Otherwise re-bid five-card suit.
	15 – 16	Bid four-card suit if lower ranking. Otherwise re-bid five-card suit.
	17 – 18	Bid four-card suit.
	18 – 19	Jump in four-card suit.

[c] YOUR HAND	POINTS	BID
Two five-card suits.	12 – 14	Bid second five card suit if lower ranking. At minimum level.
	15 – 16	Bid second five card suit at minimum level.
	17 – 19	Bid second suit at the three level with a jump if necessary. With Clubs and Spades rebid 2♠.

Note 1

JUMP. This means that you call higher than is necessary simply to overbid. e.g.

SOUTH	NORTH
1♦	1♥
2♠	

This demonstrates your strength in points.

[2] THE 'FIT' – To a response of a suit where you hold 4 cards.

Partner responds with a bid of ONE in a major suit. You have four of that suit, so your hands fit.
Now you may add to your values an assessment for DISTRIBUTIONAL POINTS as follows:–

A Void = 3
A Singleton = 2
A Doubleton = 1

YOUR HAND	POINTS	BID
Your own biddable suit, plus four cards in Partner's suit.	12 – 16 (including distributional points)	Single raise in Partner suit.
	17 – 19 (including distributional points)	Double raise in Partner's suit.
	19 – 21 (including distributional points)	Treble raise in Partner's suit.

If you should be lucky enough to possess more than the maximum points shown in the above tables – e.g. 20 or 21 plus, you will find proposals for dealing with that interesting situation in the later exercise called FORCING BIDS.

[3] TO A RESPONSE AT THE TWO LEVEL
The same general rules apply as in [1] above with the following modifications:

[a] You may bid 2NT with only 15 to 17 points.
[b] You should not introduce a higher-ranking suit unless you have 17 points or more.
[c] You may support a response of 2♥ with only three cards in Hearts because by bidding Two, Partner has guaranteed a five-card suit.

D. Reverse Bidding

Rebidding a suit higher than the one opened is called a **Reverse**.

Eg. (i) SOUTH	NORTH	(ii) SOUTH	NORTH
1♦	1♠	1♠	2♥
2♥		3♦	

This cannot be a minimum bid because Partner, if he has a weak hand and wants to correct to the first suit, has to go to the three level. In the first case, 3♦, in the second, 3♠. You are FORCING him, and he may not pass. EXCEPT WHEN HIS OWN RESPONSE WAS 1NT.

It follows that, in reversing, Opener needs at least 17 points and should also have five cards in the first suit bid.

E. The Science of Deduction (An Interlude)

"I perceive that you have been unwell lately."

"Summer colds are always a little trying."

"I was confined to the house by a severe chill last week. I thought, however, I had cast off every trace of it."

"So you have. You look remarkably robust."

"How, then, did you know of it?"

"My dear fellow, you know my methods."

"You deduced it, then?"

"Certainly."

"And from what?"

"From your slippers."

We are not all so perceptive as Mr Holmes, which is perhaps just as well since we should find few opponents ready to take us on. Yet, in the bidding towards a good contract you must go further than the counting of points and the number of cards in each suit. Particularly, it must be stressed, those in your own hand. Because YOU means you and your partner. You can SEE the cards you hold. You have to DEDUCE from the bidding what cards are in Partner's hand and relate them to your

own. Moreover, and this will be discussed at length later on, Opponents may also be bidding and much can be deduced from what they say. So remember that the first object in bidding is to find a FIT with Partner and the only way to do this is to listen attentively to what messages he sends you. Listen, then make as accurate deductions as you can.

For example, you open with 1♥ Partner responds 1♠.The Beginner's reaction may be: "He doesn't like my suit." A poor deduction. The correct one is this: "He has less than four Hearts. In fact he has at least 6 points and a biddable suit of at least four cards in Spades." So you conclude; let us explore a little further.

Again you can make deductions as the bidding continues, and values change accordingly. Partner bids Spades and you have only one card in that suit. Your Singleton is a liability. But if he bids Hearts, your Singleton adds immediately to the value of your hand.

Or, maybe, you open 1NT with 13 points. Partner bids 2NT showing 11 to 12. Have you enough for Game. Now look again at the rest of your hand. Have you some Tens and Nines? Where are they in relation to your Honours? Have you a five-card suit? If the result of that inspection is satisfactory, bid Game. This is not a gamble. Your deduction shows that Game is probable if not certain. Consider the contents of your suits. If you hold, King, Jack, Ten, Nine you can probably make two tricks, but if the suit shows Ace, Five, Four, Three, one trick is your ration.

Yet each suit contains 4 points, so it is important not to be obsessed with the points system to the extent of ignoring the Science of Deduction, which can also be called common sense. Elementary, my dear Watson.

EXERCISE 4
Responder's Rebid

In this exercise you are still South, but Partner has opened the bidding, so you are Responder. The second round of the Auction continues. Partner has bid twice and you have responded once. Now you are to make your second bid.

On many if not most of these BREAD AND BUTTER hands your response will be No Bid because both of you will have already called to your respective limit.

But if Partner has changed the suit on the second round, or has bid No Trumps, you must think again. His bid may not be forcing if it was at the minimum level, but your own hand may now look altered in relation to his.

Example:

The bidding went:—

Example:	SOUTH	NORTH
	—	1♥
	1♠	2♣
	?	

♠Q 7 6 5 ♥J 4 2 ♦K 7 6 3 ♣J 4

With only three Hearts you have correctly taken the opportunity to show your Spades rather than give direct support. Now is the time to reveal the fit. Remember that by bidding Hearts and then Clubs Partner promises five Hearts. So, with a weak hand you give him simple preference to 2♥.

But supposing your hand is a little stronger, say:

♠A J 7 6 ♥K 4 2 ♦10 7 6 5 ♣Q 3

You must tell Partner the good news with a bid of 3♥. This is called "jump preference". This bid is not forcing, but would encourage Partner to bid Game if he is better than minimum. In this example you have responded at the one level, so Partner's rebid of two was not forcing. With a poor hand with better Clubs than Hearts, you would be at liberty to pass.

This sequence introduces a new element:

SOUTH	NORTH
—	1♠
2♣	2♥

By your response at the two level you have promised at least nine points. To prevent the bidding becoming a series of jumps it is accepted that YOU CANNOT PASS WHEN PARTNER INTRODUCES A NEW SUIT AFTER YOUR RESPONSE AT THE TWO LEVEL.

The principles remain the same. With three Spades and a suitable ten points, you give jump preference. With four Hearts, you raise to 3♥ (or 4♥ if you have 12 points or more). The problem hand is this:

♠ A 4 ♥ K 3 2 ♦ 8 7 2 ♣ K 9 8 7 3

You may not pass, you may not raise a second suit with only three Trumps, so you are forced to give "false preference" to 2♠ to keep the ball in play. It may seem unnatural, but remember Partner promises five Spades so if he passes now you will have seven Trumps between you. If he has a good hand the bidding will continue smoothly to the Game.

Frequently Responder will be able to place the final contract with his second bid. On other occasions he will be able to describe his hand with sufficient accuracy to allow the Opener to make an informed decision by giving preference, bidding No Trumps or rebidding his own suit. Rarely he will be faced with an apparently insoluble problem.

The bidding has been the same as in the previous example:

SOUTH	NORTH
—	1♠
2♣	2♥
?	

♠ A 4 ♥ K 3 2 ♦ 8 7 2 ♣ K Q J 7 3

The hand is the same except for the added power of the Clubs. No bid can describe this hand. You have the values for Game, but which Game? No Trumps with no Diamond guard could be silly. 4♥ or 4♠ would be too precipitate. Luckily there is an answer to Responder's dilemma, the **Fourth Suit**. This bid is employed as an artificial device to extract extra information. It is only common sense to use the fourth suit in this way because after the Partnership has bid three suits it is most unlikely that it will wish to play in the unnamed suit.

On this hand you would bid 3♦. Partner would respond as follows: with a Diamond stopper he rebids 3NT. With an undisclosed distributional asset, he would show it. Thus 3♥ would show five Hearts, four Clubs would promise 5-4-1-3 distribution revealing Clubs as the best strain and 3♠ would suggest six Spades, (although Opener may be forced into a corner with a 5-4-2-2 shape with no Diamond stop).

Some of the sequences that follow the introduction of the fourth suit are admittedly complicated. But there are two golden rules:

[a] A player who bids the fourth suit promises at least one more bid.

[b] The fourth suit at the three level is forcing to Game.

EXERCISE 5
Opener's Rebid on Stronger Hands (forcing)

You are South, and once again the Opener, but now you have a stronger hand – Bread and Butter perhaps, but with a little honey to spread on it.

In each of the hands shown you have around 19 points and Partner has followed your opener with a bid in another suit. Clearly, if you can agree a fit, Game is the objective. Note that in spite of the honey your first bid is still at the ONE level. Partner must be given the chance to respond at his minimum strength and whatever he calls (except No Bid) you will be able to FORCE him to bid again by your re-bid .

The correct rebids in this exercise are all forcing bids. Strong balanced hands present no problem beyond totting up your points and making the right rebid in accordance with the table shown in Exercise 3.

Strong unbalanced hands fall into two categories – those without support for Partner's response and those with support.

A. Hands without support for Partner's response

Provided that your hand has sufficient distribution, e.g. 5-5 or better, the rebid will present no problem (see Exercise 3 section C). Either a jump rebid or a reverse will adequately describe your strength. Don't forget that a reverse occurs when Opener introduces a lower ranking suit at the three level:

SOUTH	NORTH
1♥	2♦
3♣	

♠A 8 ♥A K 7 4 3 ♦9 ♣A Q 10 8 5

This is a reverse because it fulfils the essential qualification that Responder's preference must be given at THE THREE LEVEL.

B. Hands with support for Responder's response

Once again most hands can be adequately expressed by giving jump or double jump support. i.e.

SOUTH	NORTH		SOUTH	NORTH
1♥	1♠	or	1♥	1♠
3♠			4♠	

Occasionally the exceptional shape requires a different technique. Suppose you hold:

♠– ♥A Q 7 3 ♦A K 9 8 7 ♣A Q 4 3

You open 1♦ and your partner responds 1♥. It would be incorrect to rebid Hearts for two reasons. First of all your hand is too powerful. In the second place the success of any slam venture will depend upon where Partner's high cards are placed. Here are two possible hands for Responder:–

[i] ♠K Q 10 4 ♥J 9 8 6 ♦6 4 3 ♣J 7

[ii] ♠10 9 8 7 ♥K J 10 9 8 ♦Q J ♣7 2

Both hands have 7 points:–

On [i] 4♥ is the right final contract.

On [ii] 7♥ is an excellent proposition.

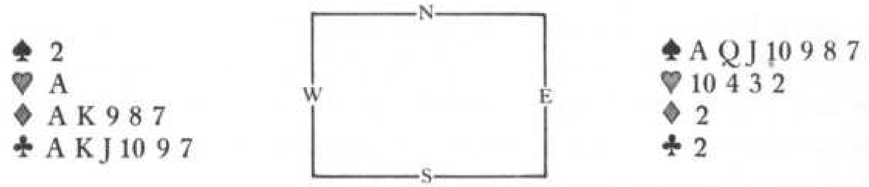
To assist Partner to value his hand you must show him your shape. The best rebid is 3♠, promising no Spade loser and implying powerful shape and controls. Where it can cost nothing, make a habit of describing your distribution. An intelligent Partner will then place the proper value on the high cards that are working.

EXERCISE 6
Responses to Strong Rebids

This time, Partner is Opener; also he has the honey-pot, so these are your second-round responses to his forcing second-round bids. You will note that in all the hands shown, PASS is inadmissable, and there will be few of these bidding sequences that do not end in a Game contract.

By the very nature of things you are destined to play the minor role in these sequences. Often you will be required to do no more than give obligatory preference to his forcing bids. Sometimes you will have a hopelessly unsuitable hand. Whatever you do don't pass. That will incur your partner's justified wrath.

Don't persist with some tattered suit of your own when it is evidently of no interest whatsoever. This breeds distrust, and is responsible for this sort of unsatisfactory exchange:



The Bidding went:-

WEST	EAST
1♣	1♠
3♦	3♠
4♦	4♠
5♣	P.

West has grown accustomed to East's stubborn bidding. So when, as on this occasion, East perfectly correctly insisted on his own suit, West unpardonably ignored him.

It is truly said that poor players overbid big hands and underbid small ones. It is one of the most exhilarating moments when you assess that a superficially modest collection has assumed priceless worth.

Here is an example, you hold as South:-

♠ 10 7 6 4 ♥ K 3 ♦ Q 10 ♣ J 6 5 4 3

The bidding goes:-

SOUTH	NORTH
—	1♦
1♠	3♥
3NT	4♣ (1)
4♦	4♠ (1)
5♥	6♣
7♦ (2)	

(1) Cue Bids – see Exercise 20

(2) North has shown a powerful red suiter with controls in both suits. Your Honours should prove invaluable.

This is the hand North should hold to justify his bidding:-

♠ — ♥ A Q 10 5 4 ♦ A K 10 6 4 3 ♣ A

REVISION

So, having reached this happy situation and before discussing other matters we pause to reflect on questions raised during the journey we have travelled together so far. In general these are aspects of bidding worth recalling for the sake of emphasis or elucidation and they are followed by Bidding Tables taking us to the point we have reached.

[1] TRUMPS

Eight trumps are needed to play comfortably in a suit contract. Nine are better. The eight trumps holding is guaranteed in the simple opening response of 1 – 2 when each Partner promises at least four. **But**, if one Partner rebids a suit, showing at least five in it,the other, if he has adequate points, may support with only three. Any three will do, but two are not enough.

You must have at least five in a suit to rebid it with or without support from Partner.

As Responder, you should have a five-card suit for your first response at the two-level:

OPENER	RESPONDER
1♠	2♣

Otherwise four-card suits can be bid at will. For instance:–

OPENER	RESPONDER
1♥	1♠
2♦	

Opener needs only four Diamonds.

or

1♥	1♠
2♥	3♣

Responder needs only four Clubs.

[2] NO TRUMPS

When you respond 1NT to your Partner's call of a suit, you are saying "I have 6 to 9 points, no real suit of my own, and I cannot support yours." Your hand may look wretched but with 6 points you do not pass. When bidding 2NT or 3NT the position is very different. The danger is that Opponents may score several tricks in a suit unguarded by either you or Partner. Constructive bidding will reveal whether you lack the necessary stoppers.

[3] REVERSE BIDDING

Example:

OPENER	RESPONDER
1♦	1♠
2♥	

Remember, if Partner wants to revert to Diamonds he must bid at the three level so Opener needs at least 17 points and five Diamonds.

[4] REASONS

[a] The reason why you open the bidding differently on four-card suits and five-card suits is to keep the bidding low while you explore.

♠ A Q x x ♥ K x ♦ x x x ♣ A Q x x

You open 1♣. If Partner responds 1♦ or 1♥ you can rebid 1♠– still at the one level. If you opened 1♠ and Partner responds 2♦ or 2♥ you have to rebid 3♣ to show your second suit.

[b] In the Tables which follow, Responder's points for a No Trump bid do not include 10 (6 to 9 and 11 to 12). The reasoning is that you can hold a "good" or a "poor" hand of 10 points. One measure of good and poor is the quality of the intermediate cards. K 10 9 8 may take two tricks; K 4 3 2 may take none if the Ace is against you and on your left. Upgrade your hand to 11 with good intermediate cards, downgrade it to 9 with poor.

[5] FIT WITH PARTNER

Shape and distribution are all-important.

♠ A Q x x ♥ K J x x x ♦ A x x ♣ x

You open 1♥ on this hand with 15 points. If Partner responds 1♠ you have a splendid fit. Up goes the value of your hand and you bid 3♠ But if Partner replies 2♣, the best you can do is to call 2♥, and await developments.

[6] THE WEAK NO TRUMP

Its special merit is that it is the highest in the range of one-bids. If Opponents want to bid they must do so at the two level. There will be times when after making this bid, all the others will pass, including Partner who holds nothing. The contract will fail with resultant penalties against you. Do not be deterred. If you had not bid, Opponents might well have found a fit in a suit and have made Game. However, in acting positively, you will find that often you will make your contract and even, Partner having the cards to support you, emerge triumphantly with a

Game on your scorecard.

The tables show clearly how to respond to Partner's call of 1NT , but note particularly that with a "good" 11 points or more and a five-card MAJOR suit, you bid 3♡ or 3♠. Note, THREE not TWO.

Again, remember that the response of 2♠, 2♡ or 2♢ is a weak take-out and opener must pass. 2♣ is the Stayman response.

You should NOT open 1NT when:–

[a] You have a Singleton.

[b] You have a five-card suit in Spades or Hearts: Open one of the major suit.

[c] You hold an unbalanced distribution such as 5 4 2 2.

[d] When you have perhaps 12 points but no intermediate cards in support. ♠ K 4 3 2 ♡ K 3 2 ♢ K 3 2 ♣ K 3 2 is better passed.

As Responder, do not support Partner's 1NT with only 11 points in your hand unless it is "good"; that is unless it contains a backing of high intermediate cards – tens, nines, and eights – or a five-card minor suit. With a good 12 points and a five-card minor, bid 2NT . With a strong six-card minor jump to 3NT . With 13 or 14 points and a five-card minor, bid 3NT .

With the values to play in 5♣. or 5♢ , reply 3♣ or 3♢ , leaving Partner the option of the final bid. The values for the jump to three in a minor suit are either a six-card suit, or a strong five-card one with good distribution and at least 15 points.

[7] SHAPE

No comment on this; just two examples which speak for themselves.

[a] ♠ K Q J 10 x x ♡ – ♢ A Q x x ♣ x x x

You open 1♠ and Partner responds 2♣ You are certainly going to make Game.

BUT: You open 1♠. Partner responds 2♡. Game is probable, by no means certain.

[b] ♠ K x x x ♡ A ♢ A Q J x x x ♣ x x

You open 1♢ and the response is 1♠. Distribution and fit are perfect. Forget the points and bid 4♠.

BUT: You open 1♢ and the response is 1♡. Now all you can manage is a rebid of 1♠.

[8] OVERBIDDING AND UNDERBIDDING

Overbidding is the less common fault of beginners, but it is the born loser's delight. Partner has responded showing 6 to 10 points. "Ah!" thinks our gambling Opener, "He's bound to have ten!" Yet there are five possible numbers of points Partner can hold; 6, 7, 8, 9 or 10, so the odds are four to one against. Bid boldly, but not with suicide in your mind.

Underbidding is more common. For example:

SOUTH	NORTH
–	1♡
1♠	2♡
?	

♠ A K J x ♡ x x ♢ K J x ♣ Q x x x

How easy to bid 2NT , and how wrong! Partner's 12 to 14 and your 14 come to at least 26 which is a Game call. YOU know this but he does not. Bid 3NT .

CONCLUSION

[a] **Assess** your hand for points and shape.

[b] **Listen** to your Partner (and to Opponents whom as yet we have not officially encountered).

[c] **Deduce** from the information you receive.

[d] **Aim** at a fit in a Major Suit.

[e] **Remember**, however accurately and sensibly you deduce and bid, everything will sometimes go horribly wrong and you will pay the penalty. Don't worry, because it happens to us all. The next hand may be a smasher and you'll make Game and Rubber.

BIDDING TABLE 1.

OPENER	RESPONDER
Open one of a suit with 12 – 19 points	With four trumps or more, support Partner's suit: at the two-level with 6 – 9 pts. at the three-level with 10 – 12 pts. at the four-level with 13 – 15 pts.
	Lacking another bid, reply in no trumps: 1NT with 6 – 9 pts. 2NT with 11 – 12 pts. 3NT with 13 – 15 pts.
	Bid your own suit, make a minimum response but only:– at the one-level with 6 – 15 pts. at the two-level with 9 – 15 pts and a five-card suit.

OPENER'S REBIDS

[i] To all single-raise limit bids except 1NT

With 12 – 16 pts no bid.
With 17 – 18 pts make an encouraging rebid.
With 19 – 20 pts bid Game.

[ii] To a 1NT response

With 12 – 16 pts no bid or make a minimum rebid.
With 17 – 18 pts make an encouraging rebid.
With 19 – 20 pts bid Game.

[iii] To double-raise limit bids

With 12 – 14 pts no bid.
With 15 pts plus bid Game.

[iv] To a change of suit at the one-level

With 12 – 16 pts make a minimum rebid.
With 17 – 18 pts make an encouraging rebid.
With 19 – 20 pts bid Game.

[v] To a change of suit at the two-level

With 12 – 15 pts make a minimum rebid.
With 15 – 16 pts make an encouraging rebid.
With 17 pts plus bid Game.

RESPONDER'S REBIDS

With 6 – 10 pts – no bid.
With 10 – 12 pts – bid higher.
With 13 – 15 pts – bid Game.

BIDDING TABLE 2.

OPENER	RESPONDER
Open 1NT with 12 – 14 pts balanced shape	Make a weak takeout at the two-level on a five-card (or more) suit if judged to be a better contract than 1NT . Bid 2NT with a good 11 or 12 pts. Bid 3NT with 13 pts plus. Bid 3♥ or 3♠ with 11 pts plus and a five-card (or more) major suit.
OPENER'S REBIDS	
Pass a weak takeout.	With a five-card minor and a good 11 pts bid 2NT . With a five-card minor and a good 12 pts plus bid 3NT . With a five-card minor and a good 16 pts plus bid 3♣ or 3♦
If partner bids 2NT rebid 3NT if holding 14 pts.	
Bid 4♥ or 4♠ if holding three plus of Partner's major, otherwise bid 3NT .	
3♣ or 3♦ is forcing so support the suit or bid 3NT .	

EXERCISE 7
Simple Overcalls

You are South and in this exercise all the opening bids are made by the opponents. But there is no reason why you should let him and his partner quietly get on with it. So you have one of three aims:

[a] To buy the contract yourself.

[b] To discourage Opponents from finding their best contract.

[c] To indicate to your partner a good line of defence.

The first weapon at your disposal THE SIMPLE OVERCALL means what it says, but the principles for using it vary considerably from those we have studied in our bidding so far, and it would be wise now to study carefully the Scoring Tables shown in Appendix A before going any further. Then commit them to memory. Consider especially at this point the penalties for GOING DOWN, i.e. for failing to make your contract. You will note how they increase according to the number of tricks you are in default and increase when you are VULNERABLE (that is when you have already made a Game).

Now see what happens when Opponents DOUBLE. The penalties climb, (as indeed do your rewards if you succeed in your contract) while if you REDOUBLE, which you or your partner are entitled to do, they soar to considerable heights. These are the relevant figures:

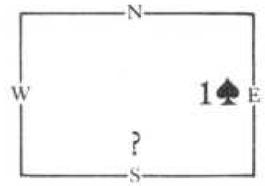
	Non-Vulnerable	Vulnerable
For the first trick down	50	100
Ditto, Doubled	100	200
Subsequent tricks down, Doubled each	200	300
So for instance, four down Doubled is:	700	1100

And, if you re-double, multiply by two.

Horrid is it not? But the way to avoid this kind of trouble when over-calling is to COUNT YOUR TRICKS, RATHER THAN YOUR POINTS. Here are two examples. You are South and in each case East has bid 1♠.

[a]

♠ J x
♡ x
♢ Q 10 9 8 x x
♣ A Q x x



♠ Q x x ♡ A x x ♢ A J x x x ♣ K x

You have 14 points but if you bid 2♢ how many TRICKS can you be sure of taking? Suppose your partner has nothing. West with the above hand will certainly Double for penalties. You might make no more than three tricks, two Aces and one Trump, and could go five down. On such a hand you must pass. But:

[b] with

♠ A x ♡ x ♢ Q J 10 9 8 x ♣ K Q x x

Again you have 14 points but now, with Diamonds as Trumps you are certain to make six tricks. You may bid 2♢ over East's 1♠.

So an overcall requires security and the best security is a sound Trumps suit. For instance, J 10 9 x x x is much sounder than A K x x x. The emphasis is on tricks rather than points, and trumps most of all.

And it follows that you NEVER OVERCALL ON A FOUR-CARD SUIT AT THE TWO-LEVEL and very rarely at the one level.

Vulnerability too is an important factor. If you are not vulnerable and Opponents have a choice of doubling or going on to bid Game they will probably bid on. When you are vulnerable they may well choose to double for penalties.

With due consideration of shape and distribution here are the values you need to be able to overcall a suit:

	Non-Vulnerable	Vulnerable
Overcall at one-level	Unimportant	3½ to 4 playing tricks
Overcall at two-level	5 playing tricks	5½ to 6 playing tricks

Note:-

K Q J x = 3 playing tricks. Playing tricks are not to be confused with Quick Tricks which are explained in Ex 16.

TWO MORE OVERCALLS

[a] East has shown 12 to 19 points. You know what you have. West is as yet an enigma. Partner may have all the other points or none at all. So if you hold a strong hand you should demonstrate it by overcalling with a jump bid.
East bids 1♡

♠ A K J 10 x x ♡ x x x ♢ A K x ♣ x

You as South bid 2♠ on the above hand. This does not force Partner but it tells him he can support you on less than if you had bid 1♠.

[b] An overcall of 1NT is strong, showing 16 to 18 points and a balanced hand. Even with a five-card minor suit it is sometimes better to bid 1NT over one of a major suit than two of your minor.

EXERCISE 8
The Double

A new symbol has appeared among the bidding; it is "Dbl" and it stands for Double.

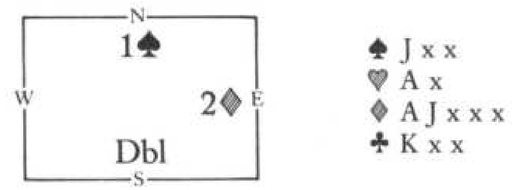
When you call Double you are making a bid – said to be perhaps the most useful bid in Bridge.

Yes, but when you call Double (and you will call it in precisely the same undemonstrative manner that you use when calling "No Bid") you are saying one of two quite separate and different things. These are:–

[a] The Penalty Double – i.e. doubling for penalty points (Sometimes called the Business Double) or;
[b] The Informative Double; which is telling Partner, and Opponents, something else.

A. The Penalty Double

The Penalty Double is a bid which tells Opponents that in your opinion they cannot make their proposed contract. Some of its possibly adverse effects on your own bidding were explored in the previous exercise and we examine it in closer detail later on, showing how and when it should be employed. For the moment it is enough to emphasize that penalty doubles at the low level are made ONLY AFTER YOUR PARTNER HAS BID.



♠ x x ♡ x x x ♢ K Q 10 x ♣ A Q x x

East bids 2♢ and for you the temptation here is to bid 2NT . Resist it and double for penalties. West is in a dilemma. To bid 2♡ could be even more disastrous than his partner's 2♢ . So he must pass unless his Heart suit is really strong, such as K Q 10 9 x x. Now for North, who opened with 1♠. He can see no reason why the contract of 2♢ should be beaten, but to bid 2♠ blindly would be a gross error, not least because it would indicate that he has no trust in your judgement. In Bridge partnerships that is not error but original sin. So North says "No Bid", East plays the hand in 2♢ and goes three or four down doubled.

B. The Informative Double

The Informative (or Take-out) Double is a conventional bid. It means "I have a fair or good hand but don't know which suit should be trumps". It will usually indicate a short holding in the suit opened by Opponents.

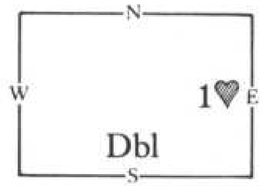
Two points of note:–

[1] This must be the FIRST bid made by the Partnership. If Partner has bid, your double of Opponents call will be for penalties.

[2] If, when you double an opening bid by an opponent, his partner passes, it is usually incumbent upon your partner to bid something. He should not pass a take-out double. On rare occasions Doubler's Partner will have a hand on which it would be more profitable for him to pass and go for penalty points, but only when he has strong sequential trumps (e.g. K Q J 10 9). If Opponent's Partner bids your Partner may pass on a weak hand as you would still be able to bid again.

Example:

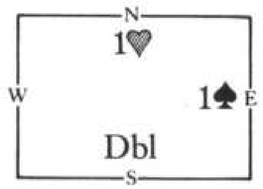
[a]



♠ A J x x ♥ x ♦ K Q x x ♣ K J x x

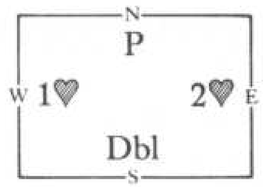
This is the ideal. With your double you are telling Partner that whatever suit he bids you can support him.

[b]



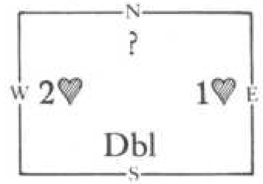
This double cannot be a request to bid because Partner has already called 1♥. The call is for penalties.

[c]



This double being the first double of your Partnership is a take-out double.

[d]



North may pass because South has another chance to bid. But he will bid if he can.

For the take-out double you need roughly the values for an opening bid, though when non-vulnerable and with the right shape you can double with a shade less. It is a most useful bid much under-used by inexperienced players. So use it every time, rather than calling a poor suit, provided you have support for anything Partner may respond.

EXERCISE 9

Response to Partner's Double

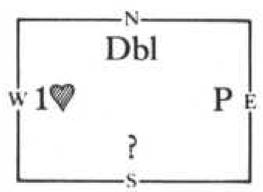
Throughout this exercise West opens the bidding with a call of one in a suit, and in each case your partner (North) calls Double. As South you are fourth in hand and, remember, if East passes the double you MUST nearly always bid. There are a few exceptions but we'll leave those for now.

Think first of the point count. West has at least 12 and Partner at least 11. These are the minimum so the chances are that you and East have about 15 points between you. Your action therefore depends upon whether East shows the strength of his hand by bidding.

A. If NO intervening bid.

Your response will of course depend on the strength of your hand.

Example:



♠ K J x x x ♡ x x x ♦ A J x x ♣ x

Partner's double requires you to bid. It is therefore important that your response differentiates between a bad hand with few points and a good one.

In the above example if you bid 1♠ you are withholding useful information. For all Partner can tell, you are bidding on four Spades to the Ten. But here you have 9 points, a five-card suit, and a Singleton Club; good strength and shape, so you bid 2♠.

If Partner holds minimum, he may pass; If his double was strongly based, he will continue the auction.

The following table is a rough guide to your bid.

POINTS	SHAPE	BID
0 – 9	—	Longest suit at lowest level.
0 – 9	Two suits of equal length	The cheapest with 4 – 4 always preferring a major. With 5 – 5 the higher.
0 – 9	5 or 6 excellent cards in Opponent's suit	Pass.
0 – 9	Balanced plus guard in Opponent's suit	1NT .
10+	Balanced plus two guards in Opponents suit	2NT .
11+	With support for any suit Partner might have	Opponent's suit.
9 – 11	With 5-card suit	Jump bid in your longest suit.
12 – 14		Bid Game in a major or bid Opponent's suit at lowest level thereby requesting Partner to show you his suit.

Note:

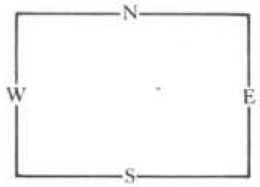
To pass your partner's double is in effect converting it to a penalty double. One therefore has to have the necessary length in that suit to obtain trump control.

B. With an intervening bid or redouble

Pass on a completely worthless hand as there is no need to bid. Bid naturally and as though Partner had made a bid in one of the suits not bid by the Opponents. Make sure you use the information they have given you when assessing the value of your hand.

C. "Double Trouble"

To complete this section we should take a look at East, who will not remain mute if he can help it. Look at the hand below. Suppose West has opened 1♥ and your Partner, North has doubled. If East holds anything at all he may bid. If he has 9 points or more as indeed he has, he will make the CONVENTIONAL response of **Redouble** (shown by the symbol Rdbl). This tells his partner, West, that they have the balance of power. South is now permitted to pass and will do so with some alacrity since he can hold nothing. Opener, West, will also pass because he knows that North cannot leave the contract in 1♥ doubled and re-doubled. Should it be made, and it almost certainly will be, it will score 120 below the line, and Game; plus possible overtricks at 200 or 400 each according to vulnerability, and 50 extra for the insult. So North must make a rescue bid.



♠ K J 10 x
♥ K x
♦ A J x
♣ J x x x

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
	1♥	Dbl	Rdbl
P	P	1♠	Dbl
P	P	P	

Assume it to be 1♠. East, with the above hand, will now double North's bid for penalties. You as South can do nothing. All will pass leaving your partner to flounder in 1♠.

It would be forgiveable if the thought of finding yourself in such a mess were to put you off the take-out double for life. But you can be quite sure that its potential rewards far outweigh the occasional disaster. And disaster is far too strong an expression for going down, provided that all the bids are at a low level. The best players in the world go down – often, but they still win more rubbers than they lose.

EXERCISE 10
Other Bidding Situations

In these hands North opens with one of a suit and East makes a bid, mostly a double of your Partner's call, and the exercise shows clearly how you, (South) should respond.

Here, as ever Deduction is valuable. North and East both have biddable hands so if you hold anything reasonable, West will be poverty-stricken; Partner and you will hold the balance of power between you. But, if you hold a really poor hand do not hesitate to pass. Opponents are just waiting to double for penalties.

A. When Partner's bid is Doubled

A rough guide to what to do is as follows:–

[1] WHEN YOU HAVE NO FOUR CARD SUPPORT FOR PARTNER'S SUIT:

POINTS	SHAPE	BID
0 – 5		Pass.
6 – 9	Four card suit	Bid suit if possible at ONE level.
6 – 9	Five card suit or more	Bid suit at either one or two levels.
8 – 9	Balanced	1NT .
10+	Balanced	Redouble.

[2] WHEN YOU HAVE A FOUR CARD SUPPORT FOR PARTNER

Although you have support, the Opponent's Double means that you will probably have difficulty establishing tricks in the outside suits. You will be unlikely to make a Game contract but the opponents might. Your tactics should therefore change and your bid should be of a pre-emptive nature to distrupt the opponents's communications. One thus raises Partner's suit with much lower values than you would normally have to have.

POINTS	SHAPE	BID
0 – 4	Four card support	Pass.
5 – 7	Four card support with shape values	Raise in Partner's suit.
8 – 9		Double raise in Partner's suit.
10 – 12		2NT shows genuine double raise values.

B. When East Overcalls

With a weak hand bid, where possible, along the same principles as though East had doubled (Section A). If you hold length and controls in East's suit do not be tempted to Double. This would only drive the opponents into another suit in which you have no real defence.

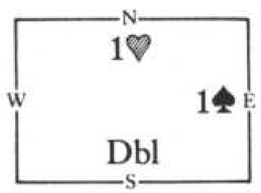
With a strong hand you must show your strength positively. Bidding the opponents' suit forces Partner to Game, implies support for his suit, and shows you lack guards in Opponents' suit. Jumping a level in a new suit forces to Game and shows either support for Partner in his suit with controls in yours or shows a good suit of your own. Where jumping a round might consume too much bidding space bid the new suit at the lowest level and force to Game later. Remember Partner must re-bid if you show a new suit. Bidding Game directly in a new suit shows great length and very little else.

At this stage any double must be for penalties as your Partner has already opened. On a strong hand with length and strength in Opponents' suits you may double. You have no fear of the opponents' finding another suit as your combined strength will surely defeat any contract. Partner will probably pass unless he sees that it is more profitable to make Game yourselves.

C. Now Some General Thoughts On Doubling:–

[1] You make penalty Doubles only when Partner has already bid.

[2] The most rewarding Doubles are those at a low level:–



Beginners find this alarming because they believe that the higher the Opponents bid the more likely they are to go down. This is an inferior deduction. Good Players will not bid high unless they are pretty sure of their ground.

[3] Be careful about doubling on the strength of what you think are certain tricks; for instance if you hold two Aces and an Ace, King, and Declarer has bid four of a major suit. He may well have a singleton and you may not make all your "certain" tricks.

[4] Beware of doubling on hands with five poor cards in Declarer's trump suit. Suppose they have contracted Game as follows:

WEST	EAST
1♥	3♥
4♥	

All you do with your double is tell them exactly where the missing Hearts lie. Keep quiet and you may surprise them into going down.

[5] When Partner doubles for penalties, be very careful about taking him out with another bid. Almost always you should pass, but occasionally you will hold a long trump suit and little else that offers defensive tricks. In that case you may deny the double by re-bidding your suit. When you do this, be very sure that your judgement is sound, because you are over-ruling Partner's considered decision.

[6] Apart from the CONVENTIONAL Re-double demonstrated in this exercise, you employ this bid only when you are absolutely certain that Opponents were mad to double you in the first place. But be warned; absolute certainty is a state of mind rarely achieved in the game of Bridge.

[7] In general, then, the Take-out Double is a tactical bid regularly used for an informative purpose. The Penalty Double is either a means of scoring extra points or, with luck, a device by which Opponents are persuaded into another contract which can be even more disastrous.

Note:

A new expression, namely the **Pre-emptive Bid**, is used for the first time in this exercise. Its full meaning and employment is revealed in Exercise 11.

EXERCISE 11
Pre-emptive Openings

You are to open the bidding and you hold the following:

♠ x ♡ x x x ♢ K J 10 x x x x ♣ K x

What are you to do with all those Diamonds and only seven points? One good answer to that is that you make a pre-emptive bid of 3♢ .

This is known as a **Weak Three**, a pre-emptive bid because it pre-empts Opponents from starting their own bidding at a comfortable one-level. With luck it may shut them out altogether even though they hold between them the values needed for Game or even a Slam call. Of course they know what the bid means as well as you do, but at the worst you will have disrupted their communications. When, as may often happen, you are left in such a contract, do not expect to make it.

So you may go down, but a sound basis for your decision will be that you expect to lose no more than 500 points if you are doubled and Partner holds nothing; that is, three down non-vulnerable or two down vulnerable.

It follows therefore that you must hold at least seven cards in the suit with high honours. Apart from that, points do not matter.

One principle, however, you must adhere to. Having made your "weak bid" on a weak hand you do NOT bid again, no matter what Partner or Opponents may call. You have said your piece and that is it.

Remember, too, that you are calling on a WEAK hand. Suppose you hold:–

♠ A Q x x x x x ♡ x ♢ K J x x ♣ x

The values here are too good. If Partner has an Ace and something in Spades you should make Game. You bid 1♠.

Weak-three openings depend on your position at the table.

As first or second bidder, follow the advice given above, but remember that Partner may have something to call in a major suit and he should not be blocked. Your hand may be suitable for a Heart or Spade contract.

♠ K J x x ♡ x ♢ Q J 10 x x x x ♣ x

On such a hand you should pass. But in third position, after Partner has passed, you know that your side cannot win Game, so you block Opponents for all you are worth.

If you have to open in fourth position you cannot make a pre-emptive bid; there is no one left to pre-empt! But always remember the value

of a part score. When the first three bidders all pass and you have a good long suit, have a go; all the others will hold something, including Partner, and your seven Clubs to the Ace, Queen, plus an outside Ace, may conceivably, as they say, turn up trumps.

Because the object of pre-empts is to disarrange Opponents' bidding, the higher the pre-empt the better. A bid of 3♣ does not disrupt the Opponents unduly. If you can open 4♢ or 5♢ instead of 3♢ , do so.

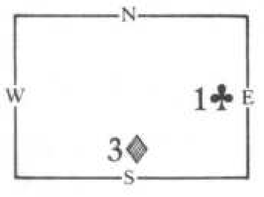
This is a reasonable hand for a non-vulnerable pre-emptive 5♢

♠ x ♡ – ♢ K J 10 x x x x x ♣ K 10 x x

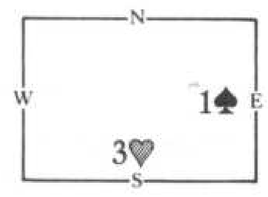
which will cause the maximum frustration. Imagine the problem faced by Opponents who have to discover whether Hearts or Spades is their best suit and what contract to go for, when their first bid must be at the five-level!

Remember too that when the opponent on your right opens the bidding with one of a suit you can overcall with a jump to the three level.

Example:



but not



In the next exercise, you will encounter a pre-emptive opening bid of three No Trumps. This has a special conventional meaning for Responder which will emerge when we come to it.

EXERCISE 12
Response to Pre-emptive Openings

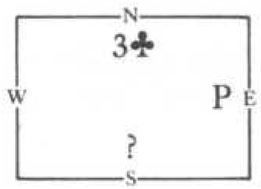
Partner (North) opens with a weak three bid and now you are to respond.

As a general rule, with qualifications to be described, you pass unless you have at least 16 points. When so equipped, bid GAME in Partner's suit even if you have only a Singleton trump; Partner is loaded with them.

Do not respond with a bid of 3NT holding 16 points unless you have at least three of Partner's suit, and then only if he opens in a minor suit.

The reason is shown clearly on this hand:–

♠ x ♡ x x ♢ x x x ♣ K Q J 10 x x x



♠ Q x x x ♡ A K x x x ♢ A K Q ♣ x

With the Ace of Clubs missing, playing in No Trumps you will never get into Dummy to make the long suit. So you bid 5♣ and make it easily, losing one Spade and the Ace of Clubs. Knowing what you do of Partner's hand, to bid 3♡ would be suicidal.

If his opening is in a major suit the best bid (again with 16 points) is 4♡ or 4♠ even with Doubletons or Singletons.

Now for some variations

[1] When Partner opens 3♢ and you jump to Game, i.e. 5♢ you roughly show that you have at least 16 points or compensating shape values. It follows that if you bid 4♢ you are sending a different message. Your hand is something like this:–

♠ x ♡ x x x ♢ Q 10 x x ♣ K x x x x

and what you are doing by raising the pre-empt is causing Opponent on your left even more grief and woe. And if your Diamonds are longer than that, go to five! i.e. you are disrupting their communications even further.

[2] Suppose Partner opens with a weak three and you hold a long strong suit of your own with plenty of points and good shape, then bid Game in your suit. It might look like this:–

SOUTH NORTH
– 3♢
4♠

♠ A K Q 10 x x x ♡ x ♢ x x ♣ A K J

Note that by bidding thus you are telling Partner that you require no aid from him in the trump suit.

[3] We mentioned previously a pre-emptive opening bid of 3NT.

This is strictly conventional. Partner is telling you that he has a long solid suit in a minor without any outside Aces or Kings. Hands of this sort are demonstrated at the end of exercise 12.

THERE ARE TWO RESPONSES

[a] PASS. Aware that Partner has no King or Ace outside his suit, you must hold sufficient guards or controls in the side suits to allow the 3NT to stand.

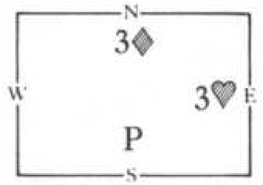
SOUTH NORTH
– 3NT
P

♠ A 7 3 2 ♡ Q J 10 5 ♢ A 9 6 2 ♣ 5

[b] BIDDING FOUR OF MINOR. Without outside controls you will bid 4 of a minor suit. By looking at your own holding in the minors you can often tell which partner prefers. For instance, if you hold five Diamonds he is unlikely to hold seven. But when in doubt, bid 4♣ which leaves him freedom of choice.

[4] Partner makes a pre-emptive bid at the four-level in a major suit. This implies a strong very long major suit with little outside. The first thing to remember here is that you are already in game. Anything you bid therefore is telling partner that there may be a Slam in view. Unless reasonably sure that there is, you must pass.

[5] A warning note. Partner opens with 3♦. East bids 3♥, and you hold:



♠ A 4 2 ♥ K J 9 7 3 ♦ 5 2 ♣ Q 10 8

A strong temptation will grip you to Double, and we ask you to resist it. No doubt 3♥ can be defeated, but you may drive Opponents into 3♠ or 3NT.

EXERCISE 13
Defence Against Opponent's Pre-emptive Bids

As we remarked above, everybody knows that a weak-three opening is a weak bid. The question now is, what can you do about it?

You are sitting South, East opens with 3♣, and anything you call must be at the three level. Naturally, with a strong hand and a really good suit, you will bid it at the three or four level. But what if your hand is strong enough but lacks a biddable suit.

In this situation Partner must be asked to bid and we recommend a conventional double for take-out, the same as over a one-bid. To make the call you should hold the value for an opening bid. Partner, of course, will reply with a suit and, with a reasonable hand, must jump to Game, showing better than a forced response.

Can Partner pass the double? He may only do so if his main strength is in the bid suit, say Q J 10 x x, AND NOTHING ELSE IN HIS HAND. This transforms the take-out double into a penalty double.

By using a double as a request for Partner to bid, you can use 3NT as a natural bid. Over an opening 3♣ bid it would be correct to bid 3NT on either of the following hands:–

♠ A 4 ♥ Q 3 ♦ A K Q 7 6 5 4 ♣ K 3

or

♠ A Q 4 ♥ A J 3 ♦ A Q 4 2 ♣ K 10 9

And don't forget that if this convention of Doubling an opening pre-empt for take-out is to be used, you and your current partner must agree it before you start to play, exactly as you decide on the weak 1NT.

EXERCISE 14
Responding to Partner's Double of Opponents Pre-emptive Bids

Normally your response to Partner when he doubles a pre-empt at the three-level is to accept this bid as a take out double. You must call the full value of your hand as Partner will usually have no more to offer.

Partner doubles an opening bid of 3♦ and you hold the following:

♠ J 8 6 5 2 ♥ 4 2 ♦ A 8 4 ♣ K J 7

In this hand you must jump to 4♠, just as you would jump to 2♠ responding to a double of 1♦ .

But, if your hand is something like this:–

♠ J 9 6 3 ♥ A Q 4 2 ♦ 8 7 3 ♣ K 6

The correct response would be 4♦ because you are willing to play in either of the major suits.

In all cases your response will depend on the vulnerability situation and you will assess the position differently according to whether it is you or Opponents who are vulnerable. The exercise shows this point clearly. If no vulnerability is shown assume that both sides are non-vulnerable.

There are times when, holding strength and length in Opponents' suit you may pass, thus converting the take out double into a double for penalties. But, if you have such control plus other good values, you must decide whether bidding 3NT will be more profitable than the prospective penalty.

EXERCISE 15
Opening on Strong Hands – Two Level Openings

We have discussed at considerable length what we called Bread and Butter hands and those with a little honey added. This was appropriate because these comprise by far the majority of the hands you will be dealt. But now and again, praise be, you will pick up the cards and realise with a glow of excitement that what you are holding is a pot of genuine caviar.

When this happens, the aim now is not merely at Game, for you are fairly assured of making that, but of going sky-high towards either a Small or a Grand Slam. Methods of bidding safely for these heights are discussed in a later exercise; meanwhile it is worth reminding yourself of the rewards for achieving them viz:

	Non-Vulnerable	Vulnerable
SMALL SLAM: 6 bid and made. 12 Tricks. Bonus:	500	750
GRAND SLAM: 7 bid and made. 13 Tricks. Bonus	1000	1500

You need about 33 points for a small slam, 37 points for a Grand slam, but less with excellent shape and "fit".

So we introduce opening bids at the two-level. These are strong, each in its own way, and they come in three different varieties.

[1] 2NT . A balanced hand with 20 – 22 points.

[2] 2♣. This is conventional and the strongest opening there is. It does not imply that you have a biddable suit in Clubs, but it guarantees at least 22 points.

[3] 2♦ 2♥ or 2♠. In the Acol style, show Strong hands with good distribution or one solid or near solid suit, almost always a six-carder.

With this call you guarantee to make eight tricks without help from Partner.

These are typical hands on which to open 2♠.

[a] ♠ A K Q J X X
♡ x
♢ A K x
♣ x x x

[b] ♠ A Q J 10 x x
♡ A K Q J 10
♢ x
♣ x

Played with Spades as trumps [a] has eight PLAYING tricks, six trumps and two Diamonds. [b] has ten PLAYING tricks, five trumps and four Hearts.

However, a word of caution. After a succession of Bread and Butters suddenly you have a spoonful of Caviar. Don't get too excited. Partner may hold a Yarborough (that is, a hand with no honour cards at all). At best you may achieve Game, and then only after a grim struggle.

EXERCISE 16
Responding to Partner's Two Opener

When Contract Bridge began, bidding was based on the holding of Quick Tricks, a system long superseded by the counting of points and shape. But they still have their usefulness in responding to Partner's strong opening. The values are as follows:–

An Ace is 1 Quick Trick
A K is 2
K Q is 1
A Q is 1½
K x is ½

That is all. The A K Q is not three; the Queen is not quick enough.

A. Partner opens with 2♣

You count your quickies, bearing in mind that the bid is forcing and you may NOT pass. With one exception (see 4 below), you must keep the bidding open until Game is reached, however poor your hand. Deal with it as follows:–

[1] With less than 1½ Quick Tricks make a conventional bid of 2♢.

[2] With 1½ Quick Tricks or more, but no five-card suit, respond 2NT.

[3] With 1½ Quick Tricks or more and a five card suit, respond 2♡, 2♠, 3♢ or 3♣. Do not jump the bidding; Partner must be left free to call again at the lowest level.

[4] It was stated that on an opening of 2♣, Partner must bid on to Game. This is the one exception. If your response is 2♢, showing nothing, and Opener follows with 2NT, showing a minimum 23 points, then you may pass.

B. Partner opens with 2NT.

[1] On this call you may pass with less than 4 points.

[2] With 5 points or more, bid:– 3NT

[3] With 5 points or more and with four-card majors, bid:– 3♣ (Stayman).

[4] With a five-card major, less than 4 in other major, and 5 points or more, bid:– 3♡ or 3♠.

[5] With a six-card or longer major, bid 4♡, or 4♠ but this call should be made only when, having added Partner's maximum of 22 points

to your own holding, you realise that a slam is not on. You are telling Partner to stick to Game.

In assessing the points/quick tricks values you should note that:–

Ace = 4 points = 1 Quick Trick
K Q= 5 points = 1 Quick Trick
K x = 3 points = ½ Quick Tricks
A Q= 6 points = 1½ Quick Tricks.

C. Partner opens 2♠ or 2♡ or 2♢

Every player you meet as a partner will accept that the 2♣ opening must be kept open. Not everyone, however, will agree that the same applies to an opening bid of two in the other suits. We recommend strongly that it should, so we suggest that when discussing conventions with a partner you should say quite positively: "Please keep my strong twos open, for one round".

On this basis here are the appropriate bids:

[1] With less than 1½ Quick Tricks,bid 2NT.

[2] With less than 1½ Quick Tricks, but holding 10/11 points and a guard in all the other three suits, bid 3NT.

[3] With 1½ Quick Tricks or more, bid a suit but give absolute priority to supporting Partner.

Example:

SOUTH	NORTH
—	2♠
3♠	

♠ x x x ♡ K x ♢ A Q J x x ♣ x x x

South bids 3♠ in spite of the Diamond suit.

[4] Even after a negative 2NT you may be able to support Partner on the next round.

Example:

SOUTH	NORTH
—	2♠
2NT	3♠
4♠	

♠ K x x ♡ J x x x ♢ x x x ♣ x

But if you have nothing to say after your negative 2NT you may pass on the next round if Partner repeats his suit.

Proviso

We stressed pretty firmly that 1½ Quick Tricks are the minimum for a positive response to an opening two.

But rules, unlike conventions, should be side-stepped if common sense demands. For instance, North bids 2♣ or 2♢ or 2♡ and you as South hold:–

♠ K J 10 x x x ♡ x x ♢ K x x ♣ x x

or

♠ K Q J x x x ♡ x x ♢ x x x ♣ xx

Only one Quick Trick in each hand, but the strength of the suit justifies a bid of 2♠ in either case.

Another Caution

Partner opens 2NT and you hold 13 points and an excellent suit of Spades. "Aha," you think, "a slam hand", and you jump to 4♠. No you do not, because the bid to Game is weaker than the simple raise. By calling Game you tell Partner that here is your limit. If you call at the three level he is FORCED to continue and an exploration can begin between you which may lead to the Small or the Grand Slam. Don't hurry when another round of bidding is compulsory.

EXERCISE 17
Opener's Further Bids

A. As South, you open with 2♠, 2♡, or 2♢

This is forcing, but only for the first round. Remember that Partner will support your suit if he possibly can, even with three small cards and 1½ Quick Tricks. If he bids a negative 2NT he may pass if you repeat your suit on the second round. So the onus is on you to reach Game if you can. It is therefore imperative that your opening two in a suit other than Clubs is based on the possession of a self supporting trump suit.

However, when Partner responds to your opening by calling a suit of his own, you will understand that his hand is unbalanced, with one long suit containing some honours, and if he keeps re-bidding it after you have shown alternatives, then show your trust in his judgement by accepting his bid at the Game level with that suit as trumps.

B. As South, you open 2♣

North responds with 2♢, showing less than 1½ Quick Tricks. You will bid Game if you can, so remember to avoid the re-bid of 2NT (because that allows Partner to pass) unless you have the minimum 22 - 24 pts. With more than that but no biddable suit, rebid 3NT.

When you have a strong suit, re-bid at the 2 level if major or three in a minor. Partner must re-bid to this forcing call. If he can, he will show his longest suit. If he has responded a negative 2♢ he has already told you that he has a weak hand, so on a balanced hand he can bid NT. In the first case you may be tempted to support him. But remember he has been forced to say something and may have very little indeed. In the second you have the choice of playing in 3NT, introducing a new suit, or returning to your own suit at the Game level.

Note:
If Partner re-bids his own suit at a high level, this means he has considerable length. By supporting him you may reach a Slam Contract.

EXERCISE 18
Responder's Further Bids

This exercise develops bidding sequences after Partner (North) has opened with a strong two, particularly an opening 2♣ bid.

Responses on the first round have already been covered, so now we go on to what happens next, and since you are tentatively reaching out towards Slam Contracts, it would be well at this stage to explain the Blackwood Convention which is used world wide as an aid to explore for them.

It was invented in 1933 by Mr. Easley Blackwood of Indianapolis and has stood the test of time, though modern experts often use other methods (to be explored later). This is how it goes in its simplest form, leaving out the decorative variations added during the last fifty years.

You and Partner have opened the bidding and a point is reached where a suit has been agreed. A reliable sequence would be:

SOUTH	NORTH
—	1♡
2♢	2♠
2NT	4♢
?	

North has bid three suits, indicating that he is short in Clubs. Here is South's hand.

♠ K 6 ♡ 7 ♢ A Q 8 6 4 3 ♣ Q J 10 2

There appears to be an excellent fit and a Slam is possible if North should hold two Aces. South now asks him if he does by bidding a conventional 4NT.

North's conventional responses are as follows:

5♣	No Aces or four Aces.
5♢	One Ace.
5♡	Two Aces.
5♠	Three Aces.

Let us suppose that North's bid is 5♠. He has already supported you in Diamonds and must, by his bidding, have other values. A Grand Slam is therefore a possibility, but you don't rush at it. What you want to know about is Kings, so you bid a conventional 5NT and if North replies with 6♡ he has two Kings which must be the two red Kings because his bidding has shown that he is short in Clubs. You are home and dry with a contract of 7♢. 6♠ would show three Kings and so on.

But observe, if Partner shows only two Aces, the Grand Slam is impossible unless he has a void in the suit with the missing Ace and you are now too far advanced to find out. 6♦, the small Slam, is your maximum. You will bid it, of course, though you are still ignorant about Kings and have no way of knowing where they lie.

So Blackwood, indeed all Slam bidding, is a hazardous affair. But great fun. More will be said about slam bidding in a later exercise.

Reverting now to this exercise – Responder's further bids.

North opens 2♣ and you respond 2♦. As you know, if North follows with a call in a suit he is forcing you to bid again. But if his bid is 2NT and your hand is quite worthless, you may pass. Remember though, that worthless means literally that. With a quick trick or three points, or even just five of a suit to the Queen, you must bid on towards game.

If possible, it is better to avoid a call of 2NT on the second round.

Example:

SOUTH	NORTH
—	2♣
2♦	2♥
?	

♠ Q 9 4 2 ♥ 10 7 ♦ Q 10 5 4 ♣ 8 7 2

The shape is suitable for No Trumps, but 2♠ is better. After your first response Partner knows you have a poor hand. Tell him about your biddable Major and leave the next move to him. If the final contract is in No Trumps it is invariably better played by the person with the strong hand.

When Partner opens with two of a suit other than Clubs, the main point to remember is that this bid is only forcing for one round. Having shown a weak hand by responding with 2NT you are free to pass on the next round if Partner rebids his suit.Should he bid a new suit you are required to bid again. With moderate values you should bid Game if you can.

SOUTH	NORTH
—	2♠
2NT	3♦
?	

♠ K 6 4 ♥ 10 8 7 6 ♦ Q 3 ♣ 10 9 4 2

Bid 4♠, not a supine 3♠ which would be consistent with a Yarborough.

EXERCISE 19

Responding with Strong Hands – Forcing Bids

This time, as South, you too have a good hand and your first response to Partner's opening bid should often reflect this by calling at a higher level than necessary to keep the bidding open. You are telling Partner that Game is certain and that he must bid once more, whatever his strength or weakness.

You cannot achieve this by supporting Partner's suit even at the three-level when he has opened at the one-level because this indicates only 10 to 12 points and four cards in his suit. This is a limit bid.

So you resort to what the Americans call **The Jump Shift**. Its meaning is simple; you bid any other suit than Partner's at a level higher than you have to.

Example:

SOUTH	NORTH
—	1♣
2♥	

♠ A Q 8 ♥ K Q J 7 2 ♦ 10 7 ♣ K J 8

Your 16 points are just enough to force Partner with a bid of 2♥. Suppose North's opening to be on minimum points you still have enough for Game. If he has 17 or more you are into Slam country and you have given him just the information he requires.

You will of course remember that when you bid a new suit after Partner's opening at the One-level, this forces him to call again even without a jump. Some of the hands in this exercise show the occasions when you should avoid a response at the higher level. Often although you have 16 points or more, by jumping you might consume too much bidding space to explore the best contract.

Example:

Bid

SOUTH	NORTH		SOUTH	NORTH
—	1♡	NOT:—		1♡
2♢	2NT		3♢	3NT
3♠			?	

♠ A Q 10 7 ♡ J 4 ♢ A K Q 10 4 ♣ Q 3

with this hand.

After Partner's re-bid you should have enough information to move on towards Game or beyond. It would be unsound to show Spades. Respond 2♢ and show the Spades at the next round.

Sometimes, holding a strong hand, you have to "invent" a bid so as not to mislead Partner.

Example:

SOUTH	NORTH
—	1♠
3♢	

♠ K J 8 7 3 ♡ A Q 4 ♢ K Q 6 ♣ K 2

Clearly, even if Partner holds just over minimum there is Slam potential. Spades will almost certainly end up as trumps, but if you bid 3♠ or 4♠ Partner may well pass. So you invent the bid of 3♢. There is no danger of playing the hand in that suit as trumps, but you have told Partner that you have 16 or more points and after his re-bid you can settle on Spades as the trump suit and begin to exchange information about controls.

EXERCISE 20
Bidding To Slam

Imagine that you have been chosen to play cricket for England. You go in to bat at Lords when three wickets have fallen cheaply. You play the game of your life and make a century. The crowds cheer; even the opponents applaud. It's a great moment in your young life.

But suppose the rules were a little different. What if, even before you stride to the wicket, you have to declare publicly: "I am about to make a century"? And then, if you are bowled out at 98, you lose all those runs and your team is fined another hundred or so because of your incompetence.

What if you announce just fifty as your objective and go on to make a hundred but you are only awarded a measly sixty? You would think twice, wouldn't you, before taking up either challenge.

Yet this is exactly the situation facing the Bridge player who bids a Grand Slam. Bridge, as you see, isn't cricket. It has however, another advantage, apart from the immense satisfaction you obtain from doing something so difficult as bidding and making a Slam. The bonus points (shown in the scoring tables, Appendix A) are valuable indeed and can make all the difference between a winning or a losing rubber. And you don't get bonus runs at Lords!

But because Slam bidding is so difficult you approach the final Contract with considerable care, and various methods of guidance have been developed. We recommend that you think along these lines.

A. Realise that accurate valuation is the first essential

It is still valid to rely on total points to assess the potential of two balanced hands, the standard being 33 points for a Small Slam and 37 for a Grand Slam.

But generally the emphasis changes from totting up all possible points to giving appropriate extra weight to Aces and Kings and their location in regard to the shape of the suits. Jacks may be virtually disregarded, considered merely as points; even Queens unless they are part of a long suit, lose much of their status.

It is vital to ensure that you and your Partner have a good fit; when that is assured you attempt to discover whether between both hands you hold first and second round controls in all suits. Remember that Opponents need only one or two tricks in uncontrolled suits to beat your Slam.

B. Trial Bids

These are bids at the three level and are employed only after a MAJOR suit has been agreed. It is usual to make a trial bid in a suit which needs support and which may contain say two losers. It is a useful bid for investigating either Game or Slam potential. Trial bids are only used when the partnership is NOT yet committed to Game.

Example:

SOUTH	NORTH
1♥	2♥
3♦	

♠ A 8 ♥ K Q 10 6 4 ♦ Q 7 5 3 ♣ A 4

Here South is hopeful of a Game in Hearts, but he wants to know more and much will depend on North's Diamond holding.

Some schools make trial bids at the 4 level, but the Partnership should first agree to this, otherwise their bid will be taken as a cue bid.

C. Blackwood Convention

Having already outlined the mechanics of the Blackwood Convention we follow with some comments, mostly of a warning complexion, because when you use it, Partner will be sure that you are committed to a Slam.

[1] The Partnership must have agreed on the trump suit.

[2] Bidder should feel safe at the five-level and be confident of twelve playing tricks in the combined hands.

[3] Beware of using Blackwood with a void suit or a worthless Doubleton. (see cue bids).

[4] You bid 4NT and Partner responds 5♥ he has two Aces, but which two?; and there lies the snag if you hold only one. Or, on his bid of 5♦ which Ace is missing if you hold only two?

So here is a paradox. Blackwood is often more useful as a device to keep you out of a Slam when you lack the right Aces than it is to help you into one.

[5] There are occasions when 4NT is not conventional. The general rule is that it should be regarded as natural whenever the Partnership has not agreed on a suit.

Examples:

[a]	SOUTH	NORTH
	1NT	4NT

[b]	SOUTH	NORTH
	2♣	2♦
	2NT	4NT

[c]	SOUTH	NORTH
	1♠	2♥
	3NT	4♦
	4NT	

On hand [c] North is encouraged by South's strong rebid. His 4♦ is a Slam invitation politely declined by South with the 4NT bid.

D. Cue Bids

In situations where Blackwood looks inappropriate, perhaps because you have two losers in a side suit, cue-bidding may prove to be the best approach to a slam contract. When a trump suit has been agreed and the Partnership is committed to game, any bid in a new suit, at the 4 level, is a cue bid. It shows control in that suit, usually the Ace or a void, but it may be a guarded King or a Singleton. It indicates too that the Player has reserves of strength and believes a Slam is possible. However, at any time in these bidding sequences either partner may state that he can go no further by reverting to the agreed trump suit.

Example:

SOUTH	NORTH
1♣	1♠
3♠	4♦

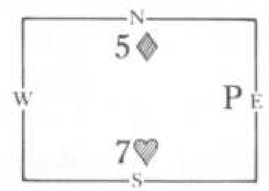
If Game were the only objective, North would bid 4♠. His cue bid is telling Partner: "I have first round control of Diamonds. If you think there might be a Slam, press on." 4♠ from South means: "I am signing off. Game is enough." 4♥ would show a control and 5♣, by going beyond the Spade Game level accepts the Slam proposal.

After first-round controls have been cue bid, subsequent cue bids in the same suit indicate second-round control. Study the following

hand and observe how, as the action develops, each Player gets a clear picture of Partner's hand.

Example:

♠ J 10 9 8 ♡ Q J 10 6 ♢ 8 ♣ A Q 8 6



♠ A K 3 ♡ A K 9 8 2 ♢ A 4 3 ♣ K 7

The Bidding

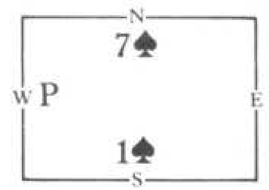
SOUTH	NORTH
1♡	3♡
3♠ (1st control)	4♣ (1st control)
4♢ (1st control)	4♡
5♣ (2nd control)	5♢ (2nd control)
7♡	

South, satisfied, and no doubt elated, bids the Grand Slam and has no trouble at all in making the contract. Note that the 3♠ bid is not a trial bid as you are already committed to Game. The 4♡ bid shows that you have no more to say for the moment.

You will be extremely fortunate if, once in fifty times, your Slam-bidding achieves this result with such smooth inevitability.

We remember years ago, making a modest opening bid of 1♠. Partner, an experienced player, responded with 7♠ just like that. South gasped but breathed easily when, after a Diamond lead, Partner laid down his hand.

♠ K J x x ♡ A K ♢ A Q x ♣ A Q x x



♠ A Q 10 x x ♡ Q x x ♢ K J x x ♣ x

A stone cold certainty, Declarer thought. He played the Ace of Diamonds from dummy, intending next to draw trumps, and then the blow fell. West held six Diamonds and East ruffed with his only trump. One down.

The lessons to be learned are not that a Grand Slam should be avoided on such hands; Modern approach bidding would probably have reached the same contract. But a modern East would have made a Lightner double asking for an unusual lead. In Bridge there is no such thing as a stone cold certainty.

And now, to conclude these notes on bidding, a wise saw from a leading expert at the great game. "Never double a Grand Slam unless you require an unusual lead or you hold the Ace of Trumps."

BIDDING PRACTICE

There are five parts to this section:–

Opening the Bidding.
Responding to Partner's Bid.
Pre-emptive Openings.
Response to Pre-emptive Openings.
Bidding to Conclusions.

The Companion will deal hands at random for you to continually practice each type of bid. It will even keep a score of the number of times you get the answer right at the first attempt so you can observe your progress.

The hands dealt in "Bidding to Conclusion" will have above average strength so you should encounter interesting situations.

When you reach this section of your Bridge Builder programme, you are no longer a learner. You have, we hope, assimilated all the essential ingredients of Bridge lore.

Imagine that you have passed your driving test in a standard family saloon. Ambitiously you decide to drive a Ferrari round Brands Hatch. The basic skills you have acquired will stand you in good stead. But you will require a little extra knowledge if you are to negotiate the hair-pin bends at speed.

For the most part the Companion will follow the same style and conventions that are set out in the Exercises. You should have no difficulty in following the bidding on hands where there is only sufficient strength for Game. On hands when Slam is possible you may notice some divergence. The divergence principally occurs after an opening 2♣ bid and a positive response. The criteria for your opening bid and response remain the same. When, as North, the Companion has given a positive response you may assume it shows:–

Either North has:–

[a] 2 Aces or 3 Kings or an Ace plus 2 Kings

Or

[b] 11 points with a five card minor and at least 2 Kings.

A. Opener's rebid

When you rebid, the Companion's second bid is designed to convey the maximum information. As in any partnership, the bids will reflect varying degrees of enthusiasm.

Suppose the bidding has started:–

SOUTH	NORTH
2♣	2NT
3♡	?

If Responder has four card support he will make a cue bid. With three card support he will still cue bid unless he is 4–3–3–3, when he will raise to Game with a minimum, or bid 4NT with a maximum. With no fit (e.g. a Doubleton) he will bid 3NT (unless he has an Ace and two Kings; see below).

You may think that this use of 4NT is unnatural. But it isn't really. It is bad Bridge for Responder to take control of the auction by bidding 4NT as Blackwood, because the vital filling cards that are required for a Grand Slam are invariably in the strong hand. So we use 4NT to show a maximum, i.e. an Ace and two Kings with either a Tripleton or Doubleton in the suit the Opener has rebid.

Opener's 3rd Bid

You have opened 2♣ and received a positive response of 2NT. When you introduce your suit the Companion has made a rebid, as described above. You will be faced with two decisions:

Firstly – what level should the contract be?

Secondly – what suit should you settle on?

[1] THE LEVEL

In valuing a hand for Slam purposes you must place an extra emphasis on Aces, Kings and Queens in your long suit or suits. Queens and Jacks in short suits should be largely disregarded.

Sometimes a study of your hand, combined with the knowledge of the contract your Partner has promised, will enable you to determine the final contract at this point. If you are certain that you have discovered the best suit and that no vital control is missing, bid the Slam at once. Purposeless embroidery is futile.

Example:

SOUTH	NORTH
2♣	2NT
3♡	3♠
?	

♠ A J ♡ A Q 10 8 4 ♢ K Q 10 4 ♣ A K

Partner, North, has promised an Ace and two Kings plus at least three Hearts. He must hold the Ace of Diamonds and the two major Kings. You are likely to make a Grand Slam, so bid 7♥.

[2] THE SUIT

Sometimes Responder has not agreed adequate support to be certain of the best final strain. However, the controls justify leaping to the level you assess is best. So with the hand above if Responder had bid 4NT instead of 3♠ on the second round, you would bid 7♦ to cater for the case when he has four Diamonds and only two Hearts.

The Devil that dumbfounds experts, novices and computers is duplication. Sometimes although you know that Responder has three Kings, you will be uncertain whether he has the "right" King. This will be all-important when you are 5–4–3–1.

Consider this sequence:

SOUTH	NORTH
2♣	2NT
3♥	3NT
4♦	4NT

♠A ♥A Q 10 8 4 ♦A Q J 10 ♣A Q J

Partner is known to have three Kings, his 4NT is designed to discover whether they are working. You make the most informative bid, 5♣ showing your tripleton, to allow him to place the final contract.

Here are two hands he could hold:–

[a] ♠K 7 4 ♥K 6 ♦K 8 6 5 ♣10 4 3 2

[b] ♠10 7 4 ♥K 6 ♦K 8 6 5 ♣K 4 3 2

With [a] he knows the King of Spades is wasted and will settle for 6♦ or 6NT.

With [b] he knows all his Kings are working and will sail into Grand Slam.

These more sophisticated tools are also used in conjunction with trial bids in sequences following direct or jump raises.

In conclusion, don't forget that this part of the programme is designed to cater for millions of hands. Occasionally the Companion will make a bid you don't like. Please repay its earlier patience when you were less expert!

PLAYING THE HAND

Planning the Play

The bidding is over, the player on your left has led and Partner has laid his cards on the table. Before you even think of playing a card, study Dummy and your hand and make a plan. Develop the habit of remembering the Play Alphabet:

A. **Assess the opening lead**
   Could it be the top of a sequence, the fourth highest, a Singleton and so on?

B. **Bidding**
   Can you deduce anything from the opponents' bidding?

C. **Count your tricks**
   How many obvious tricks are there? How many more do you need?

D. **Dangers**
   Can the opponents establish a suit of their own? Is there a danger of your long suit being trumped?

E. **Entries**
   Can you get to and from your hand and Dummy?

F. **Finesses**
   Are there any finesses to take? Can you avoid taking them by setting up a suit of your own for discards or by waiting for Opponents to lead that suit?

Once you have done the ABC check list, then:

[1] IN NO TRUMPS

[a] Count your certain tricks.

[b] See if you can establish a long suit of your own even if it means losing a couple of tricks in it. (It is no crime to lose a trick. Lose tricks when it suits you, not when it suits the opposition.)

[c] Is there any danger of the opponents establishing a long suit against you? Don't cash Aces and Kings in that suit – the tricks won't run away from you.

[d] Look for finesses – and ways of avoiding them, if possible.

Note:

DO NOT LEAD OUT YOUR ACES AND KINGS AND HOPE FOR THE BEST. (REFER BACK TO THE VERY FIRST SECTION – MAKING TRICKS)

[2] IN A SUIT CONTRACT

[a] Go through the ABC check list.

[b] Can you afford to draw Trumps? It is often best to do so.

[c] Or do you want to cross ruff? (Trump one suit in hand and another in Dummy.)

[d] Can you make tricks by ruffing with Trumps in dummy before drawing Trumps. (Trumps in your hand will make anyway.)

[e] Can you establish a side suit either by driving out the high cards Opponents hold or by ruffing them?

[f] Count your tricks and losers again.

[g] Look for finesses and ways of avoiding them.

Do all that BEFORE PLAYING TO TRICK ONE. Make a plan, then try to follow it until you have acquired enough information either to be able to continue it or to modify it.

Learn to count the hand. That only involves counting to 13 four times. It is not necessary to remember how many cards of a suit have been played – only how many are left. It takes time to learn how to do this, but it makes the game much easier if you can master it.

Above all, do not rush to play to trick one; do not simply cash all your Aces and Kings. Remember that you do not have to make every single trick.

The Companion contains several hands for you to play. Your task will obviously be to make the contract. Each hand has been carefully selected to present an interesting problem. A series of questions may be presented to direct you to the problem and its possible solution.

The defenders are experts and they will try and defeat you. In each hand there is, however, a strategy where success is usually guaranteed and they can do nothing to prevent you succeeding. The Companion will adopt this strategy. You might see other strategies, however; these will invariably depend upon luck, favourable splits, or the defenders playing badly. The Companion will not let you explore such play and will try and guide you along the straight and narrow path to success.

Hands 1 to 40

Hand 1 – A Finesse

At first sight you have only seven tricks – five Diamonds and the two black Aces. The Club holding of A Q is a hint as to what to do. Lead a low Club from hand and put on the Queen. If the King is on your left, you have conjured up your eighth trick by playing the Queen. If it is on your right, then of course you lose. Since the contract will fail if it does not work, it is worth trying. If it works, you gain, if it fails, well, you would have been down in any case.

Hand 2 – Another Finesse

This time you are missing both the King and the Queen. If they are both on your left, you will make two tricks. You will also make two tricks if they are split by finessing on both the first and second rounds. If they are both on the right you will always fail – that's just bad luck.

Notice the play of the Heart suit. If you play the Ace on the first or second round, you may lose control. Suppose you win the first trick, and finesse the Diamond as you have to. If East wins he will return a Heart and since West has presumably led from a long suit, he will reel off enough tricks to put you down. It is a Bridge sin to play Aces too quickly. If you hold up the Ace until the third round, it is possible East will not have a Heart to lead back when he gets in. Learn when to hold up your Aces and when to take them quickly.

Hand 3 – Finesse and avoiding a blockage

First the Spades. When you have an eight card suit missing the Queen and you cannot afford to lose a trick in the suit, then the correct play is to finesse for the Queen. Because the Jack is in your hand, you must place the Queen where you need it to be (on your right) and play to the King on the table, finessing the Jack on the way back. To run the Jack from the hand may seem tempting but that would be wrong. To be successful you require West to hold the Queen and also East to hold the ten. Even so the play will not always work. It is however, what is known as the best 'percentage' play, that is, it gives you the best chance of success.

Note also the play of the Diamond suit. It is essential to play the Ace and Queen from hand before crossing to the King on the table. If you did play the King first, you would not be able to get on to the table to enjoy the long Diamond and discard your losing Club. It is absolutely essential to sort out the question of entries before tackling

a suit. Nothing is more irritating than to have winners in Dummy and no method of getting there to cash them.

Hand 4 — Severing opponent's communications

Here you have to lose the Ace of Clubs so that you can make four tricks in the suit when it has gone. But, look what happens when you imprudently play your Diamond Ace on the first or second trick. When East wins the Ace of Clubs, he has a Diamond to return and West cashes his Diamonds before you can cash your Clubs. This sort of race to establish a suit is the essence of much of No Trump play. A useful rule of thumb is not to play your Ace until as late as possible if you have no other stop in the suit and there is a danger of Opponents being able to run off an avalanche of tricks in a suit they have managed to establish. The longer you hold off, the greater the chance of Opponents not having another card in that suit to lead back.

Hand 5 — Sending a boy to do a man's job

It looks very tempting to cash the Ace and King of Hearts before ruffing the third Heart on the table. But note that East has been discarding Hearts, so that it is all too likely it will be he who is ruffing. When you do ruff don't fiddle about playing a small one. Send a man to do a man's job. Ruff with the Ace. It would be quite fatal to draw Trumps, by the way. You make just nine tricks if you do, but the Club finesse might be right. On the other hand it might not. If you do take the Club finesse, you are relying on chance. Ace of Hearts followed by ruffing the second Heart with the Ace gives you a 100% chance of success.

Hand 6 — Drop or finesse

As a general rule, with the eight cards in a suit you finesse for the Queen. With nine cards, it is touch and go, but unless there are any clues, it is normal to play for the drop. Do not sometimes play for the drop and sometimes finesse holding nine cards. If you always do one or the other, you will be right half the time. If you vary according to the direction of the wind, life being what it is, you will always be wrong! Notice that after cashing a top Trump, Declarer crosses to Dummy with a Club rather than unnecessarily risking a Diamond ruff.

Hand 7 — Preserving entries

A spectacular example of a common theme. Win the first trick in Dummy and you go off in a lay-down Grand Slam because you cannot get back onto the table to make your Diamonds on which you can discard your losing Hearts. When planning the play of a contract, look out for this problem of getting from one hand to another and how to circumvent it. Sometimes you can't; more often, with forethought and care, you can.

Hand 8 — Leaving a trump at large

Very often it is correct to draw Trumps, but sometimes it is not. If you play a third round of Trumps in this hand, you will go down. You are bound to lose the Queen of Hearts, but by not leading a Heart which you must lose, you are preserving your two Hearts – one in Dummy to ruff a Spade after a Diamond ruff established the suit for a second Spade discard.

Hand 9 — Cross-ruffing

Sometimes it is possible to make an enormous number of tricks by ruffing one suit in your hand and another in Dummy. To work out whether you need to do this or not, there is a simple rule. Add up all your side suit winners, (that is in the suits other than Trumps) deduct that from the contract and that leaves you with the number of Trump tricks you need to make. Here, for example, you only have four tricks in side suits – the Ace of Spades in Dummy, the Ace of Clubs in your hand, the Ace of Diamonds in Dummy and the King of Diamonds in your hand. You thus need eight tricks from the Trump suit to make your contract. You can make them by ruffing Spades in your hand and Clubs in Dummy. Notice it is nearly always essential to cash your side suit winners before starting a cross-ruff. If you do not, there is always a danger of an opponent being able to discard on one of the suits you are ruffing and so come to a ruff himself.

Hand 10 — A problem in communications

Even though your Spades appear poor, in fact there is no danger in the suit even if you play the Ace at trick one. Opponents may take the Queen and ten, but your nine prevents them from running the suit. Do not automatically refuse to take Aces on the first round. The other cards in the suit will give you an indication as to what to do, as in this case. The real danger is Clubs where you could easily lose three tricks before it is convenient. So, win the Ace of Spades at trick one to prevent that switch. You have seven tricks, and the only chance of making two more is in Diamonds. You are short of entries (you have only the ♦ A K on the table) and for the contract to succeed, the Diamonds have to split three-three. It is against the

odds, but since it is the only chance, assume they do split favourably. Duck one round of Diamonds by playing low in both hands and then when you get in again, you will be able to make the Ace and King of Diamonds and the two other Diamonds which will be good.

Hand 11 — When to refuse a ruff

It is tempting to ruff the third round of Spades, but if you do you will go down. Since you will only have three Hearts left in your hand, you will have to lose a Heart and there is still a Club loser. So, do not ruff. Instead, throw away a Club from your hand on the third Spade. If West continues a Spade, ruff low in Dummy and if East over-ruffs, take the trick with a Heart Honour. Now, as long as the Hearts do not break worse than 4 – 2, you will only lose three Spades; you will make four Hearts, four Diamonds and two Clubs. If you only have a 4 – 3 Trump fit, this is often a solution to the problem.

Hand 12 — Establishing a suit by ruffing

When you are clearly short of tricks for your contract, as here where you have only seven, see if you can set up a side suit. Although the Spades look most unpromising, ruff two Spades in Dummy, then (with luck) there will be none left and your fifth Spade will give you the tenth trick – four Hearts, two Spade ruffs in Dummy, two Spades and your two minor suit Aces.

Hand 13 — Another problem with Aces

It may seem a terrible waste not to take a trick with the King of Diamonds in your hand. If you do you will fail because you have only the Ace of Hearts on the Table as an entry and it is too much to hope that the Diamonds are going to divide 3 – 3. You can make absolutely sure of the contract by overtaking the King of Diamonds with the Ace, leading the Queen and losing a Diamond to the Jack. Now you have three winning Diamonds on the table, and the Ace of Hearts to get there. It would have been thoughtless to win the Ace of Hearts in Dummy. When you have counted your tricks, make absolutely sure you can get from one hand to the other to make them.

Hand 14 — Playing it carefully

With nine Trumps in the combined hands, it isn't really possible to lose a trick, is it? Unless West has all four and you inadvertently win the first round of Trumps on the table with the ace. So, when you hold nine Trumps, with the ten in one hand and the nine in the other, cash a high Honour in the hand which has two to guard

against that fate. Having taken that precaution, you are amply rewarded when the Diamonds finesse, which you cannot avoid, turns out to be right.

Hand 15 — Finessing into the safe hand

As long as East can be kept out of the lead, your Jack of Diamonds is a certain trick. So you can safely lead the Jack of Clubs from Dummy and run it. Even if West wins, your Diamond holding stops him running off his suit before you run yours. Frequently, unlike in this case, you can take a finesse either way. Always take into the hand which is going to lead up to your precariously guarded suit, not through it.

Hand 16 — A Double Duck

At the first sight, you have four certain losers:– a Spade, a Club and two Diamonds. But if you draw Trumps and deliberately lose two Diamonds before fiddling about with other suits, even though the defence will establish their Club winner, you can throw away your Spade loser on an established Diamond. Remember – it is no shame to lose a trick or two. Particularly if you can establish the suit for discards by doing so.

Hand 17 — A Ruffing Finesse

If you finesse the Queen of Hearts you will go down. East will win the King and cash the King of Diamonds. So, after drawing Trumps, play the Ace. Lead the Queen. If East covers the King, you ruff and later on you can throw away your Club and Diamond losers on the Jack and ten of Hearts to make all 13 tricks. If he does not cover, throw away the Diamond anyway, then they cannot cash the King of Diamonds. You can discard the losing Club in your hand later and come to twelve tricks.

Hand 18 — Holding up in a suit contract

As it is often a good principle to hold up an Ace for one round in a No Trump contract in the hope of cutting communications between the defenders' hands, so it can be in a suit contract.

If you win the first Club, the defence will make two Clubs, a Spade and a Heart. If you win the second Club, when East gets in with the Ace of Spades and subsequently with the Queen of Hearts, he will not have a Club to lead back and in the end, Dummy's fourth Heart will be a parking place for your third Club. Of course, if East holds three Clubs, it all goes wrong, as it does if West holds six Clubs

and East has any Spades other than the Singleton Ace. But holding up for one round is your best chance, slender though it might be, so do it.

Hand 19 — Developing a suit by ruffing

With that fistful of Spades, it looks idiotic not to draw Trumps. But if you do, you will come to only 11 tricks, one short. On the other hand, if you win the first trick, cash the Ace of Spades, cross to Dummy with the Ace of Hearts, ruff a Heart in hand, draw the last Trump by crossing to Dummy's nine of Spades and ruff another Heart, life begins to look better. Cross to the King of Spades, ruff another Heart, cross to the King of Clubs and your Heart is good to discard one of the losing diamonds so that in the end you lose just one Diamond. So, beware of drawing Trumps hastily, however obvious it looks and BEWARE ENTRIES.

Hand 20 — Holding up with a double stop

Win the first trick with the Ace or King of Hearts and the defence will knock out the other Honour and establish their suit before you can establish Diamonds. If East should have a third Heart to return, it does not matter because in that case West can only have four and the defence will make two Hearts and two Diamonds. This sort of hold up is very often correct, particularly when declarer has to dislodge two defensive tricks in his suit.

Hand 21 — Finessing twice

First, notice what a mistake it would have been to put up Dummy's Jack of Hearts on the first trick. Provided you play low, whatever the distribution, you must make two tricks in the suit. either the ten will win the first trick or the Ace will take one of defenders' Honours in which case Jack on the table opposite ten three in hand is the equal to the other. For instance, if East plays the Queen, as in this case, and South the Ace, then Opponent's King will drop the Jack, but the ten is still there and will be good.

The order of playing the Diamonds is critical. You must start with the nine and follow with the four from your hand if it is not covered. Then you can run the Jack, dropping the ten from your hand, finally playing the three to your Queen, thus making four tricks in the suit. If East has the King and three or more, that is the only way of making four tricks. Of course, if West has the King you will probably fail anyway, but then the element of luck is one of the charms of Bridge, fickle though she may sometimes be.

Hand 22 — Another problem with entries

How to get into a tatty looking Dummy to cash the tricks you have managed to set up is one of the perennial problems of Bridge. It is essential to play the two of Hearts from Dummy and win with the Ace WHATEVER EAST PLAYS. If you win the ten, lose a Diamond as you must, and then lead the five of Hearts; if West jumps in with the King you are forever cut off from the Diamonds. So, win with the Ace. With the Queen Jack of a suit in Dummy and ten small in your hand, you will always be able to get on to the table and run off your Diamonds.

Hand 23 — Protecting a weak holding

As long as West cannot get into lead through the King seven of Hearts on the table, then the sky cannot fall on your head.

Let West win the first Club, win the return, draw Trumps then finesse the Diamond into West's hand. Even if he wins, he still has to lead up to the King of Hearts, or find some other suit which will give you five Spades, four Diamonds and a Club for your contract.

Hand 24 — Finessing with the right card

This is purely a matter of technique. With ten cards missing the King, it is correct to finesse. But you must also cater for the worst, that all three outstanding Trumps are on your right in the East hand. You play the Queen first. East plays the King, you the Ace and West discards. You re-enter Dummy and play a small Club, picking ten. If you play a small Club towards the Jack, you are lost. If East plays low, even when you re-enter Dummy and lead Clubs again, his ten will force out your Ace and the King is master. If the King of Clubs is in West, bad luck. Explain to Partner you were playing with the odds. Even if it was a Singleton and the Ace would have dropped it. Unlucky.

Hand 25 — Which Finesse?

Do you finesse the Heart or the Club? If you select the Heart, you are asking for miracles – first that the King should be in East and second that it should be a Doubleton so that it will drop under the Ace on the second round. If you finesse the Club, all you are asking is that the King be in East because then you can go back to Dummy with another Spade and repeat the finesse, restricting your losers to the King of Hearts and two Diamonds.

Hand 26 — Playing the odds

It looks as though you have a choice between playing off the top Diamonds in Dummy and hoping the suit divides 3 – 3 or taking the Club finesse. Mathematics favour the finesse. The finesse will be right half the time (50%), six outstanding cards will divide 3 – 3 only one time in three (36%). To avoid endless trancing trying to work out the odds, there is a rule of thumb: With an EVEN number of cards against you, expect the suit to break UNEVENLY. With an ODD number, the suit is likely to divide FAVOURABLY. You will not always make your contract, but you give yourself the best chance by playing the percentages.

Hand 27 — A simple safety play

You can afford to lose one trick in Spades. The safety play is to lead the Ace of Spades to guard against a Singleton King with West. If you finesse and the King is Singleton, you must lose another trick to the ten of Spades after the Jack has driven out your Queen. If the Ace fails to drop the King, cross to Dummy and play a Spade towards the Queen. Provided East has two Spades or more you restrict your Trump losers by one.

Hand 28 — When not to Finesse

On the bidding, and with the Queen of Hearts appearing from East on the first trick, West is marked with six Hearts. Since you have three and Dummy has three, East can only have one. Therefore, if West wins the lead immediately, he can give his Partner a Heart ruff which means the defence will take one Heart (you cannot dispose of your losing Heart), one Heart ruff, one Spade and one Club. (You can park your losing Diamond on Dummy's Jack of Clubs.) Since you can afford to lose one Spade trick, play the Ace and another, losing the trick but avoiding any chance of a ruff. Opponent's bidding is often a clue to the correct line of play. It is often correct to finesse to gain an extra trick. It is quite wrong to finesse if you can afford to lose a trick anyway and by finessing may expose yourself to a ruff.

Hand 29 — Unblocking to create a Finesse

If you make a mistake at the first trick, you may think you can rectify it and that the Companion is wilfully sending you down the wrong road. In fact, whatever you do, you cannot recover, wriggle how you will. There is only one foolproof way to tackle this.

At first sight you are going to lose a Heart, two Diamonds and a Club. However, you can discard one Diamond and one Heart provided you can get to Dummy. West's lead suggests he has the ten of Hearts (he is unlikely to lead an unsupported Jack) in which case there is a possibility you can make two Heart tricks – on the table, because the Ace and nine of Hearts will be sitting over West's ten eight.

Hand 30 — Blocking to obstruct Opponents

The lead suggests West has five Spades. He cannot have three Honours or else he would have led one. Therefore, East has only two Spades and one of them will be an Honour. So, if you play the Ace on the first round, East will have to win the second round and will not have a low Spade to lead back to his Partner – unless he tries to unblock by discarding his Honour under your Ace. If he does that then your ten nine of Spades between them are promoted to second stopper in the suit. If you duck the first trick, East will win with his Honour and return a Spade and when West wins the Heart Ace, he will finish by making four Spade tricks altogether as well as the Ace of Hearts to defeat the contract. If the suit divides 4 – 3, there is no problem. Therefore, assume it breaks 5 – 2 and work out what to do to restrict your losers to three. Watch out particularly for tens and nines in this sort of situation.

Hand 31 — How to cope with being forced

Defenders are going to keep firing Spades at you in the hope that if you have to keep ruffing, eventually you will set up a Heart Trump trick for them. If one of them has four you will. You can ruff the second Spade, but if you now draw Trumps, you are going to have none left to prevent Opponents from running off enough Spade winners to defeat the contract. So, do not draw Trumps, but lose the Club you have to lose anyway. If another Spade comes back, do not ruff this but discard a Club instead. Now, if another Spade is led, you can ruff in Dummy with an Ace, then draw Trumps and make your contract. This principle of waiting to ruff until you can take the trick in Dummy is vital for keeping control, as is the setting up of a side suit winner before drawing Trumps.

Note the principle of ruffing in Dummy earlier. This is a grown-up example.

Hand 32 — Cutting Opponents' communications

To make your contract, you need to make four Club tricks. If the King of Clubs is in West, there is no problem, but if it is in East, then the finesse will lose. The danger is that East will lead a Heart back and the defence will make four Heart tricks as well as the King of Clubs. Of course, if the Hearts divide 4 – 3 there is no problem because then the opponents will be able to make only three Hearts, so assume they are going to break 5 – 2. On the lead, that seems probable – the five cannot be the 'Top of nothing' and is much more likely to be the 'fourth highest'. Thus, if West has five Hearts, East returns a Heart, West's Ace will take your King or Jack, but then if the Club finesse loses to the King in East's hand, he will not have a Heart to return and you will make four Clubs, two Spades, one Heart and three Diamonds. In planning the play, it is vital to identify the possible danger, then see if there is a way of neutralizing it. Very often it pays to duck the opening lead simply to cut Opponents' communications, as in this case.

Hand 33 — Drawing deductions from Opponents' Bidding

West has played the Ace, King and Queen of Hearts. The Spade finesse lost to his King. But he did not open the bidding, therefore it is inconceivable that he should hold the Queen of Clubs as well because then he would have had 14 points. Looking at your hand and Dummy's, the odds strongly favour a Club finesse, but since it cannot possibly succeed, play the Ace and King and hope the Queen is either a Singleton or a Doubleton in East's hand. If it is you will make your contract; if not, you will fail, but you will have given yourself the best possible chance.

Hand 34 — Allow for the possible – not the impossible

The only danger on this hand is that the Clubs could divide 4 – 0. If West has all four. A low Club to the Queen in Dummy reveals the bad news, but now you can pick up all East's Trumps without losing a trick. Usually in this sort of situation it is normal to play a top Honour from the hand holding two of the three top Honours, but not when you are missing the Jack and the ten. If you should play the Ace first, you will go down.

Hand 35 — Keeping Trump control

This is the sort of hand where most declarers would panic and go down. With only four top tricks, even an expert would admit there were one or two things to be got right. First, the Club finesse has to be right and then the Hearts have to break 3 – 2.

To play Ace and another Heart would be a mistake. West would win and would then have control of the Trump suit. It would also be wrong to play twice in Hearts. The Ace of Hearts has to be played at exactly the second round of Trumps, as you will see if you play through the hand again. Not easy!

Hand 36 — Listening to Opponents' Bidding

Since East has shown up with the Ace of Clubs, West must have the Queen of Hearts for his opening bid. Since you cannot afford to lose a Heart, you must play the Jack from hand and if West covers, take with the King on the table. If West does not cover, there is no problem of course. Then you must finesse against East's Heart ten on the second round. It is not foolproof, but the "Backward finesse" is the only chance.

Hand 37 — Taking your chances

You have eight tricks on top. If Spades or Hearts divide 3 – 3, you will make your ninth trick with the fourth card you hold in that suit. Play the Spades first in case they split, in which case you will need the Ace of Hearts in Dummy as an entry to cash the fourth Spade. When that does not work, cash the King and Queen of Hearts in hand then cross to Dummy with the Ace of Hearts. If the Hearts break, then you can get back to hand with a Diamond to cash the fourth Heart. If they don't, you are in the right hand for your last chance – the Diamond finesse.

Hand 38 — Assuming the distribution is as you need it to be

To make your contract, you must find one of your Opponents with precisely Ace and another Diamond. If you assume West has that holding, reasonable on the bidding, then play small to the Queen and then low from both hands. West can always solve the problem by going up with his Ace in which case your King and Queen will drop Opponents' other high cards. If you decide to place East with the Ace, then play low from Dummy towards your King and if he ducks, then again play low from both hands. Since West has bid, that would be poor play on this particular hand.

Hand 39 — Counting a hand

To make your contract, you are going to need the Club finesse: the question is, which way? There is no need to guess at all. You can work out where she is. The fact that West opened 3♥ coupled with East's play of the suit marks West with seven Hearts. He followed to two rounds of Spades and since there were only three out and East had one, then he had just those two. He has followed to three rounds of Diamonds, so he cannot have more than one Club. So, cash the King of Clubs in Dummy and finesse into your hand KNOWING that East has the Queen. Counting a hand is one of the most useful habits you can acquire in Bridge. Not all hands are as easy as this one, but even so, you will find it possible if you try to count the original distribution rather than trying to place the cards that remain.

Hand 40 — A simple safety play

The complete safety play is to lead low from either hand and cover whatever card is played next. You can afford to lose just one Heart. Play low from hand and if West plays low, insert the nine. Then cash Ace, King of Hearts and concede a Heart. This succeeds against any distribution.

If you started the Hearts from Dummy. In this case, East shows out so you play the eight losing to West's Queen, but now you can finesse against West to avoid losing another trick. Of course, if the Hearts had split 2 – 2 you would have made all 13 tricks by banging out the Ace and King. But to lose the trick you can afford to lose is a small premium to be 100% sure of success.

DEFENSIVE PLAY
Leads and Signals

The bidding is over; Opponents have arrived in a contract. What do you do to try to stop them making it? Defence is by far the most difficult part of Bridge and for every rule of thumb there are a host of exceptions. But remember:–

[1] You won't have as many high cards as Opponents; that is why you are defending. Make what you have work for you.

[2] You have to make far fewer tricks as Defender to succeed.

A. Defence against No Trumps

Declarer tries to set up his long suit; so do you. Lead the longest and strongest suit held by Partnership. If Partner has bid, lead his suit. If not, lead from your longest suit. Do not automatically lead the highest. Look at the table of standard leads and you will see that almost the only time you do lead the highest is when you have touching high cards or two top Honours with some minor Honours.

B. Defence against a Suit Contract

[1] Lead Partner's suit if he bid.

[2] Lead a Singleton or the higher of a Doubleton hoping for a ruff. The next chance you have, you lead the lower of the Doubleton. Playing high and then low tells Partner you have only two in the suit.

[3] Find a lead from the table of leads.

[4] Do NOT automatically lead the fourth highest of a long suit. If you have the Ace and King, lead them hoping Partner can ruff the third round. (Compare with No Trumps).

[5] Lead the middle or top of nothing – e.g. from 9 6 4 lead the 6 or the 9.

[6] It often pays to lead the second suit (if any) bid on your left, unless you are obviously giving away a trick.

[7] If you haven't a clue, lead a trump.

Leading is difficult. Provided you avoid leading the smallest card from holdings like:

K Q x
or K J x
or Q x x

your Partner will not be able to recriminate too much! Such leads are all too likely to give away tricks.

C. Basic Signalling

[1] SUIT LENGTH SIGNALS (other than trump suit)

When following suit and holding a Doubleton play the highest first followed by the lowest. With three of that suit you play the lowest first. Basically the rule is to follow a suit upwards if you hold an odd number of cards, follow it downwards with an even number. Holding the suits below:–

♠ 10 8 5 4 ♦ 10 5 4

Follow with the 5♠ first, then the 4♠. With a Diamond suit one would follow with the 4♦ first and then the 5♦ on the second round. Do not make suit length signals in the suit which Partner has led against a No Trump contract – this can cause confusion.

[2] SUIT LENGTH SIGNALS (Trump Suit)

When following in the Trump suit you signal differently. Holding an even number of cards you play the lowest first, when holding an odd number of cards, you play down the suit. Thus in the example below, holding three you would play the 5 on the first round, the 4 on the second. Holding just two, you would follow with the 5 on the first round and the 8 on the second.

♥ 10 5 4
♥ 8 5

Discipline yourself to try to play the cards in the right order. The Companion will encourage you to do so.

[3] SUIT PREFERENCE SIGNALS

Partner has led. If you want to continue the suit, play the highest card you can afford. If you want to discourage him, play the lowest.

Another signal is the McKenney or suit preference signal. When leading a card, you hope he can ruff, you can indicate to your partner the suit which you would like him to lead back to you. Lead a high card for the higher suit than the suit led, other than the Trump suit. Lead a lower card for the lower suit.

Table of Leads

A K x x	Lead the Ace	BUT from A K x x x lead the 4th highest against No Trumps.
A K	Lead the King	
K Q J	Lead the King	
K J 10 x	Lead the Jack	Against No Trumps from A Q J 10 x lead Queen.
Q J 10 x	Lead the Queen	
Q J 9 x	Lead the Queen	
J 10 9 x	Lead the Jack	
J 10 8 x	Lead the Jack	
10 9 8 x	Lead the Ten	Or lead the top of nothing or, against No Trumps, the fourth highest.

Hands 1 to 10

Hand 1 — Second player plays low

It is tempting to go up with the Queen of Diamonds when a small one is led towards the Jack on the table. Resist temptation. If you take the Queen of Diamonds and then lead a Heart, Declarer will frustrate you by declining to win the trick. He will win the third round, but then when your partner gets in with the King of Diamonds, he will have no Heart to lead back and your tricks will wither on the tree!

Rule:

[1] SECOND PLAYER PLAYS LOW. Like all rules in Bridge, this is not a rule at all – there are far too many exceptions – but until you recognise them, it is an excellent guiding principle. In this case, you play low, Partner wins with the King and shoots back a Heart. Wriggle how he likes, in the end Declarer will not be able to stop you winning the Queen of Diamonds and the three Hearts which, with a Spade you must win, is enough to upset the contract.

[2] THIRD PLAYS HIGH. Again a rule of thumb which will stand you in good stead until you appreciate when it does not apply.

Hand 2 – Switch, but what to do?

Usually it is correct to return Partner's suit, but often it is thoughtless to the point of insanity. Declarer is obviously secure in Clubs (your

Partner's led suit) otherwise he might have put on the Queen from Dummy on the first trick. Diamonds are established so leading a Diamond or a Spade simply allows him to enjoy them. So, you must lead a Heart. Hearts being so weak in Dummy, you must lead the Jack hoping to cause Declarer the maximum embarrassment.

Rule:

DO NOT BLINDLY RETURN PARTNER'S SUIT. LEAD TOWARDS DUMMY'S WEAKNESS AND THINK WHAT MIGHT MOST ANNOY DECLARER. OFTEN IT IS THE HIGHEST OF A SUIT, IF YOU ARE ON LEAD FOR THE LAST TIME.

Hand 3 – Signalling

Declarer can see exactly what forces he has to deploy against you – he can see his hand and Dummy. Defenders' fundamental problem is that they do not know what their combined assets are. Thus signalling is vital. In this example, if North does not continue with a third Diamond, Declarer is going to make four Spades, four Hearts, one Diamond and one Club. However, if he KNOWS you only started with two Diamonds, he will lead a third one allowing you to make a Trumps trick and the contract will be one down. Tell him.

Rule:

WITH TWO CARDS IN A SUIT PLAY THE HIGH ONE FIRST THEN THE LOWER. This tells Partner you have an even number of cards in the suit. It will usually be obvious whether it is two or four and Partner can act accordingly.

Hand 4 – Keeping lines of communication open

Partner won the first trick, and then led the seven of Spades. This suggests strongly that he only had three to start with. If he had four, he would have returned his lowest (the normal lead of fourth highest although this time at trick two). From the cards you can see, the seven cannot be the fourth highest. You also have to assume Partner has another trick in one of the other suits. If he has not, then the contract is unbeatable. But if he does have such a trick, then when he takes it he can lead his third Spade, you win with the Ace and you have two established Spades left with which to beat the contract.

Rule:

BEWARE OF BEING CUT OFF FROM WINNERS. This is exactly the same principle as when, in planning the play of a contract, you deliberately lose one trick to make others. Invest one to bring in two or even more.

Hand 5 – Signalling the Distribution

The vital card in this hand is North's eight of Hearts on the first trick. If it is a Singleton, there is not likely to be much the defence can do. But if it is the higher card of a Doubleton (the famous high low signal), then East must have three Hearts (South has six, North two, Dummy two) so there is no point in leading the Ace of Hearts. Declarer will win the third round and eventually make his contract. So, South must switch to either black suit hoping that eventually his partner will have an entry and can devastatingly lead through East's Queen and small Heart towards South's Ace and ten, in which case South is going to make enough Hearts to break the contract.

Rule:

WATCH YOUR PARTNER'S DISCARDS. DO NOT BLINDLY CASH ACES. THINK.

Hand 6 – Another example

Again North has shown quite clearly which suit he wants returned. It is only a choice between two – it cannot be the suit that is being ruffed and it will not be a Trump, thus it is one of the others. In this case, though North has bid Hearts he is screaming for a Diamond lead. Had he wanted a Heart, he would have led the Jack of Clubs. See – Suit Preference Signals.

Hand 7 – Asking for a ruff

Normally you lead the Ace from Ace, King. The only exception to this rule is when you hold the bare Ace King of a suit. You lead the King first and then the Ace. To lead the King and then the Ace unambiguously means that you have precisely two. So, if your partner does it, trust him to lead back the suit for a ruff. Notice the possibility of attracting a Heart switch to give North his ruff by signalling with the ten of Diamonds on the Ace of Diamonds.

Rule:

FROM EXACTLY ACE KING, LEAD THE KING FIRST THEN THE ACE TO SHOW A DOUBLETON.

Hand 8 – Guarding a suit

Assume North is discarding Hearts while West runs off all his Spade winners. Presumably he has some Club Honour he wants to protect, otherwise he might as well have been discarding Clubs. So you can forget about Clubs. Anyway, Declarer's Ace is almost certainly sitting over your King. So hang on to the Hearts.

Rule:

IF YOU HAVE THE SAME NUMBER OF CARDS IN A LONG SUIT AS DUMMY, TRY TO HANG ON TO THEM. HE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO RUFF OUT THE SUIT FOR DISCARDS OR SET IT UP BY DUCKING ONE ROUND.

Hand 9 – Promoting a Trump

At first sight, it seems most unlikely that you can make two Trump tricks out of your holding. But if Declarer can be forced to use some of his high Trumps to ruff losers, then in time it is possible that even such a humble card as an eight or nine might be promoted to a winner.

Rule:

DO NOT RUSH TO TRUMP WITH HIGH CARDS, PARTICULARLY THE ACE. The point really is that if you keep your Trumps, you have the Sword of Damocles hanging over Declarer's puny efforts to make his contract.

Hand 10 – Promoting a Trump

It's tempting to lead a Diamond in the hopes of ruffing one later. But think what happens if Declarer is compelled to ruff instead of you. After all, you do have four Trumps. There is no reason why you should not take over Trump control from Declarer in which case the hand will probably fall apart. So lead a Heart, and keep on leading them.

Rule:

BE WARY OF PLAYING FOR RUFFS WHEN YOU HOLD GOOD TRUMPS YOURSELF.

APPENDIX A
Scoring Tables

A. Below the line

For each trick over six, bid and made:

Spades and Hearts:	30 each trick.
Diamonds and Clubs:	20 each trick.
No Trumps:	1st trick 40
	each trick thereafter, 30.

The first side to score 100 below the line wins Game. First side to win two Games wins Rubber.

B. Above the line

[1] All other scoring points. As follows:–

[a] **Overtricks**

Each trick made over the Contract scores at the values shown above. Each overtrick in No Trumps scores 30.

	NON-VULNERABLE	VULNERABLE
If Doubled	100 per trick	200 per trick
If Re-doubled	200 per trick	400 per trick

[b] **For making a contract doubled, vulnerable or non-vulnerable,** double the score and add 50 for "the insult". If re-doubled, double again. The "Insult" premium is still 50.

[c] **Premium for Rubber**

If Opponents have won no Game:	700
If Opponents have won one Game:	500

[d] **Slams**

	NON-VULNERABLE	VULNERABLE
Small Slam, (12 tricks) bid and made:	500	750
Grand Slam, (13 tricks) bid and made:	1000	1500

[e] **Honours**

Four Honours in the Trump Suit in one hand:	100
Five Honours in the Trump Suit in one hand:	150
Four Aces in a Contract of No Trumps in one hand:	150

Note:
The TEN counts as an Honour for bonus points.

[2] **Penalties:** For failing to make Contract.

	NON-VULNERABLE	VULNERABLE
	50 each trick	100 each trick
Doubled	100 first trick 200 subsequent tricks.	200 first trick 300 subsequent tricks.
Redoubled	Twice the above penalties.	

SPECIMEN SCORESHEET

Here is a typical Rubber:–

WE	THEY
500 [8]	100 [5]
60 [7]	100 [3]
300 [6]	50 [1]
120 [2]	
	120 [4]
60 [7] 40 [8]	
1080	370

1st Hand: You went down by one trick. [1]

2nd Hand: You made Game in 4 Spades. [2]
Draw a line. You are vulnerable.

3rd Hand: You went down by one trick. [3]

4th Hand: Opponents made Game in Hearts. [4]
They score 100 for 4 Honours. [5]

Draw a line.
Both sides are vulnerable.

5th Hand: Opponents went down by three tricks. [6]

6th Hand: You bid 2♠ and made 4. You earn two overtricks. [7]

7th Hand: You bid and made 2♦ giving you 2nd Game and Rubber. [8]

Subtracting one score from the other you find your partnership the winners by 710 points, which to the nearest hundred is 700.